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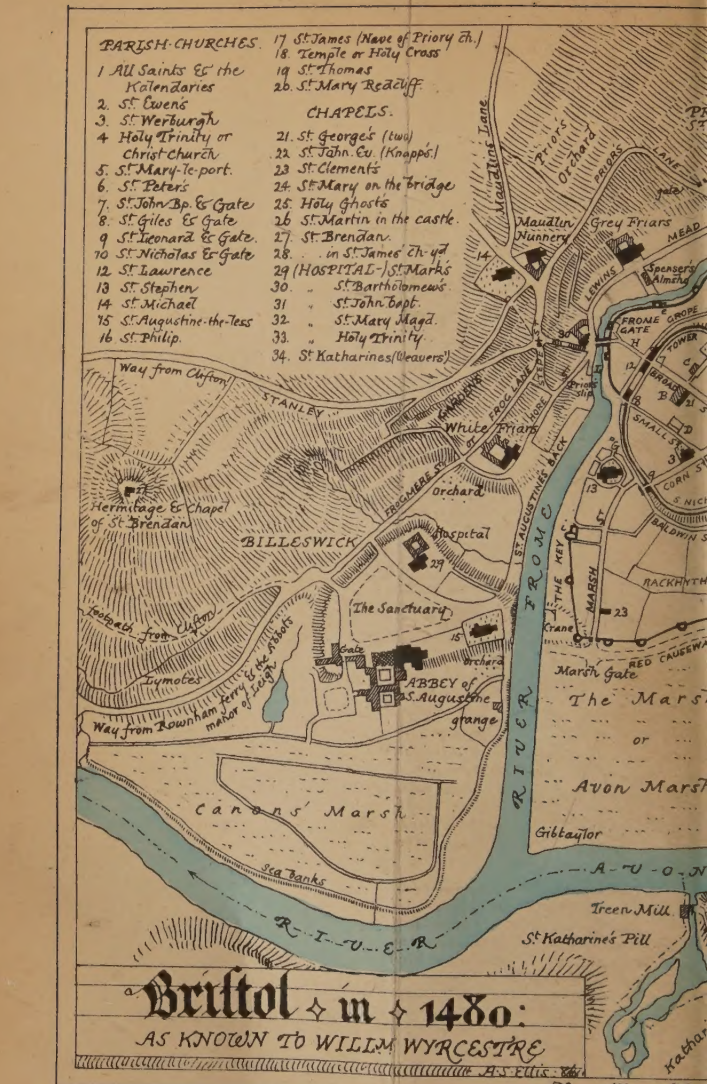
PARISH-CHURCHES.
1 All Saints & the Kalendaries
2. St Ewens
3. St Werburgh
4 Holy Trinity or Christ-Church
5. St Mary-le-port.
6. St Peters
7. St John Bp. & Gate
8. St Giles & Gate
9 St Leonard & Gate.
10 St Nicholas & Gate
12 St Lawrence
13 St Stephen
14 St Michael
15 St Augustine-the-less
16 St Philip.
17 St James (Nave of Priory Ch.)
18 Temple or Holy Cross
19 St Thomas
20. St Mary Redcliff.
CHAPELS.
21. St George's (twn)
22. St John Ev. (Knapps.)
23 St Clement's
24 St Mary on the Bridge
25. Holy Ghosts
26 St Martin in the castle.
27 St Brendan.
28. " in St James' Ch-yd
29 (HOSPITAL-) St Mark's
30. " St Bartholomew's
31 " St John Bapt.
32. " St Mary Magd.
33. " Holy Trinity
34. St Katharines (Weavers)
Way from Clifton
STANLEY
Hermitage & Chapel of St Brendan
BILLESWICK
Footpath from Clifton
Tymotes
Way from Rownham ferry & the manor of Leigh
The Sanctuary
Gate
Orchard
ABBEY of S. Augustine
grange
Canons' Marsh
Sea Banks
RIVER FROME
Maudlin Lane
Prior's Orchard
PRIORS LANE
Maudlin Nunnery
Grey Friars
MEAD
Spencer's Almshs
FROME GATE
TOWER
BROADS
SMALL ST
CORN ST
S NICH
BALDWIN ST
RACKHYTH
Grey Friars
White Friars
FROG LANE
FRIARS
FRIARS WALK
FRIARS ST
ST AUGUSTINES BACK
Orchard
Hospital
THE KEY
MARSH
Crane
RED CAUSEWAY
Marsh Gate
The Mars
or
Avon Marsh
Gibbaylor
A-V-O-N
Treen Mill
St Katharine's Pill
R-I-V-E-R
Bristol in 1480:
AS KNOWN TO WILLM WYRCESTRE
H.S. Ellis. Del
500
400
300

INNER WALL.
a Blind Gate & steps
b [Nightingales] Tower
c Pithay or Aylward's Gate.
d Site of Aldgate.
[Gates with Churches see 7. 8. 9. 10.]

OUTER WALLS.
e Bagots Tower.
f Monkes brig & gate
g Alderich's gate.
h Newgate.
i Ryalls tower
k Tower Harratg.

THE CASTLE.
l Gate & barbican
m Middle gate
n Water gate.
o Nether gate
p Hall & Chapel.
q Great Garden?
r Kings orchard

A The 'Tolsylle'
B The Guildhall.
C Taylors hall
D Remains of a Norman hall.
E Bochery or Shambles.
F Market place
G Custom house.
H Christmas or Knifesmith St.
I Baldwins + & steps.
K Spicers ho & chapel
L L Lavanderies
M Canynges house.
N Norton's house.
O Conduits: Castellets.
P P Public latrines
Q Aylward St
T T Pillories.
+ High Cross & others

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Historic Towns

BRISTOL

BY

WILLIAM HUNT

SECOND EDITION

LONDON
LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
AND NEW YORK: 15 EAST 16th STREET
1887

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PREFACE.

In the series to which this little book belongs, Bristol represents the class of ancient English trading-towns; and accordingly, while, as far as space would permit, an attempt has been made to give some notice of all matters that have had a marked effect on the history of the town and city, that best illustrate the life of its inhabitants at different periods, and above all that connect it with the general affairs of the kingdom, special stress has been laid on the story of its trade and industry. In order to do this it has been needful to treat some points of interest more slightly than they may seem to deserve. Yet it is hoped that the reader will, on the whole, gain a correct idea of the character of the city's history, and of the place that it has filled in the life of the nation. As the plan of this series does not admit of references except where absolutely necessary, it is perhaps well to say here that no pains have been spared in the matter of consulting original authorities. Bristol manuscripts have an ill name,

and I have been shy of accepting much that only comes from such sources as manuscript calendars, other than the 'Mayor's Kalendar.' From the time of the Rowley forgeries, credulity and slovenliness have overlaid the history of the city with an ever-increasing mass of fiction. Two MSS., however, stand on a wholly different footing from that of these dubious compilations. It is hard to overrate the importance of the Great and Little Red Books of the Corporation, as illustrating the municipal, commercial, and social history of an English town during the Middle Ages. Some description of them is given by Miss L. Toulmin Smith, in 'The Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar,' by Robert Ricart (Camden Soc. 1872). It is much to be wished that the contents of these volumes may be treated in the same manner as the 'Munimenta Gildhallæ Londoniensis,' and published in the Rolls series of 'Chronicles and Memorials.' My sincere thanks are due to Mr. J. T. Lane, the Treasurer of the City, for his courtesy in giving me the opportunity of consulting these MSS. at various times, to Mr. G. H. Pope, the Treasurer of the Merchant Venturers, for showing me the early records of the Society, and to Mr. F. B. Girdlestone, the Manager of the Bristol Docks, for information on the present state of the trade of the city.

Among the modern works to which I am chiefly indebted as regards the general history of Bristol are, besides Miss Toulmin Smith's excellent edition of

Ricart's 'Kalendar,' 'The History and Antiquities of the City of Bristol,' by William Barrett. Bristol, 1789—a book that must be used with caution, as it gives much weight to Chatterton's forgeries; 'Memoirs, Historical and Topographical, of Bristol,' by the Rev. Samuel Seyer, two vols. Bristol, 1823—noticed in my text (p. 189); 'Bristol Past and Present,' by J. F. Nicholls and John Taylor, three vols. Bristol, 1881—the second volume, the work of Mr. Taylor, which deals with the ecclesiastical history of the city, is trustworthy and valuable; and lastly, a pleasant little volume entitled 'A Book about Bristol,' by John Taylor. London, 1872. An admirable account of the Royalist siege has lately been given by Mr. D. Hannay, in his 'Blake,' one of the 'English Worthies' series. London, 1886. For the siege by the rebel army the reader will do well to consult the 'Life of the Great Lord Fairfax,' by Clements Markham C.B. London, 1870. Both sieges have been well described in two lectures by 'A Fellow of Queen's College, Oxford' (the late Mr. R. Robinson). Bristol, 1868. Much information about the latter part of the seventeenth century is to be gathered out of 'Edward Colston, his Life and Times,' by T. Garrard, edited by S. G. Tovey. Bristol, 1852. A collection of cuttings containing extracts from the City records, contributed to Bristol newspapers chiefly by the late Mr. Tovey, 'The Complete Guide,' by the Rev. G. Heath. Bristol, 2nd. edit. 1797, and other like sources have been

used in writing on the eighteenth century. My thanks are due for help of various kinds to Alderman F. F. Fox, Professor Lloyd Morgan of Bristol University College, Mr. J. E. Jefferies, Mr. J. Taylor, Mr. A. S. Ellis, whose knowledge of Bristol topography is sufficiently proved by the maps he has kindly contributed to this little book, and others. It is especially pleasant to me to be able to refer to the counsel I have received from the Rev. W. J. Loftie, the author of the 'London' volume in this series, and to the friendly criticism and valuable help in arrangement, and much besides, that have ungrudgingly been given me by Mr. G. Saintsbury. I should speak of the advantage I have gained from the supervision of another friend, my old instructor, and in this matter my fellow-worker, did not his name stand on the cover of this book.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

BEGINNINGS.

PAGE

Introductory—Origin of the Town—Topography—Earliest Trade—Connexion with Ireland—The Slave Trade—An Irish Invasion—Early Administration 1

CHAPTER II.

THE CASTLE.

Geoffrey of Coutances—Robert of Gloucester—'The Bristol War'—Robert FitzHarding—Colonisation of Dublin—John, Lord of Bristol—The Jewry—The Barons' War—Parliamentary Representation—Growth of Population outside the Walls—'Old Market Street'—Monastic Institutions—Increase of the Area of the Town—Temple Fee—Redcliff 15

CHAPTER III.

THE GREAT INSURRECTION.

Early Trade—Bristol Ships used in War—Early Charters—Guilds—Crafts and their Guilds—The Commune—The Merchant Guild—The Mayor—The Rent of the Town—Growth of Privileges—Strife with the Lords of Berkeley—The Great Insurrection—The Fall of Edward II. . . 42

CHAPTER IV.

THE BLACK DEATH.

PAGE

War with France—Bristol Ships—Wool Trade; the Staple—The Black Death—A New Class of Journeymen—Disputes in Crafts—Bristol a County—Government by an Oligarchy of Capitalists—The Common Council—The Court of Aldermen—Lollardy—The Fall of Richard II. 72

CHAPTER V.

THE GREAT MERCHANTS.

Civil Tumults and Foreign Wars—William Canynges—The Fellowship of Merchants—Yorkist Sympathies—The War of the Roses—A Private War—An Appeal of Treason—The Pious Deeds of the Merchants—Their Wealth—Their Municipal Pageants—Desire for Knowledge 91

CHAPTER VI.

A NEW WORLD.

Character of the Period—Religious Discord—Dissolution of the Monasteries—Bristol an Episcopal See and a City—Sacrilege and Knavery—Protestant Martyrs—Visit of Queen Elizabeth; Pageants and Plays—The Sweating Sickness and Years of Scarcity—The Cabots—Discovery of North America—Robert Thorne—Trade with the Canaries and elsewhere—The Merchant Venturers—Warfare with Spain—Colonisation of Newfoundland—Colonisation of New England 114

CHAPTER VII.

CIVIL WAR AND PARTY STRIFE.

How the City was alienated from the King—Neutrality and Decision—A Royalist Plot—Fortifications—The Royalist Siege—Bristol under Rupert—The Roundhead Siege—Sectaries — West India Merchants — Petitioners and Abhorrers—Surrender of the Charters—Revolution . . 144

CHAPTER VIII.

ODDS AND ENDS.

PAGE

Edward Colston—Trade in the Eighteenth Century—Privateers —Extent and Aspect of the City—Manners and the Drama —Newspapers—The Hotwells and Clifton—Methodism—Literary awakening, Chatterton, Southey, and Coleridge . 167

CHAPTER IX.

POLITICS AND RIOTS.

War of American Independence—Burke's Election for Bristol—Instructions and Mandates to Members of Parliament—Causes of Discontent at his Conduct—His Independence—His Partial Secession from Parliament—Party Spirit and Incendiarism—Irish Trade—Roman Catholic Relief—Burke rejected by Bristol—Roman Catholic Emancipation and Parliamentary Reform—Some Eighteenth Century Riots—Reform Riots 190

CHAPTER X.

DECLINE AND REVIVAL.

Bristol Commerce at the End of the Last Century—Rule of Self-Elective Oligarchies—Period of High Port Dues—Municipal Reform Act and the Free Port Association—Ruin of the West India Trade—Emancipation of the Slaves—Equalisation of the Sugar Duties—Trans-Atlantic Steamships —Purchase of the New Docks—Conclusion 207

INDEX 223

MAPS.

BRISTOL IN 1480 . . . . . *Frontispiece*

BRISTOL CIRC. 1066 . . . . . *To face page* 1

BRISTOL CIRC. 1250 . . . . . „ 35

PLAN SHOWING THE LINES FOR THE DEFENCE OF BRISTOL, 1643–5 . . . . . „ 149

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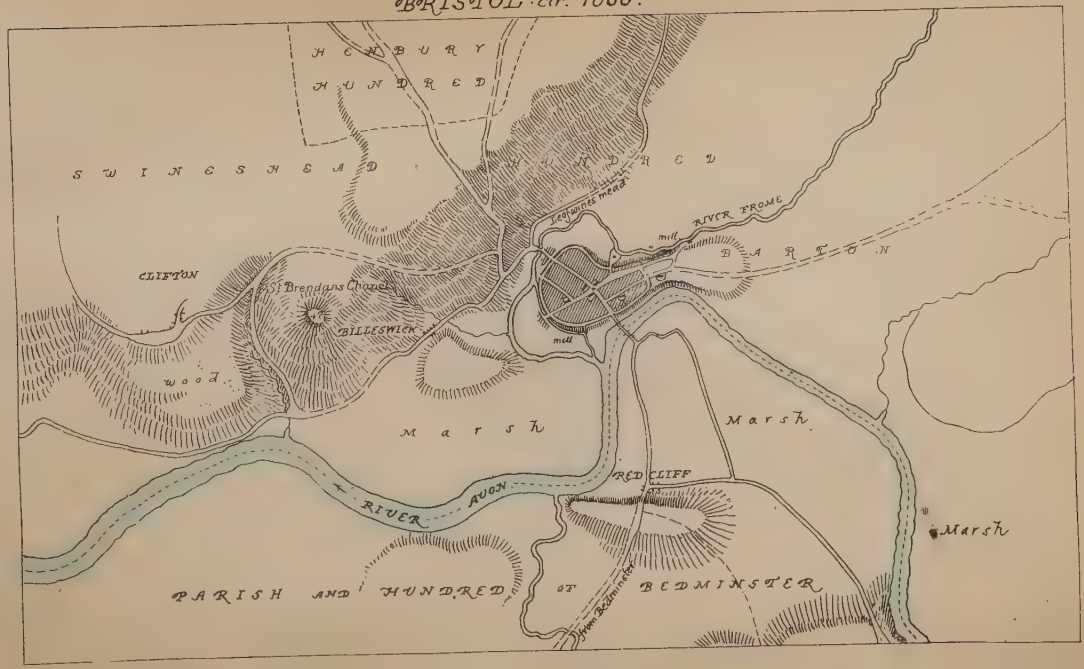
BRISTOL. cir. 1066.
HENBURY
HUNDRED
SWINESHEAD
HUNDRED
leat which to mend?
mill
RIVER FROME
BARTON
CLIFTON
St Brendans Chapel
BILLESWICK
mill
wood
Marsh
Marsh
RED CLIFF
RIVER AVON
Marsh
PARISH AND HUNDRED OF BEDMINSTER
From Bedminster

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BRISTOL.

CHAPTER I.

BEGINNINGS.

Introductory—Origin of the town—Topography—Earliest trade—Connexion with Ireland—The slave trade—An Irish invasion—Early administration.

THE place that Bristol holds in our national history is one of peculiar importance, for it was for centuries the greatest purely trading town in a country that owes its greatness to its trade. For centuries it was second only to London, and London at least from very early times has been something more than a city of merchants. Bristol history, indeed, does not begin until a period that seems almost modern, when one thinks of the relics that bear witness to the overthrow of Aquæ Solis, the forerunner of Bath, or of York, or Lincoln, or other cities of Roman times. For Bristol has always been an English town, and the first fact we know about it does not take us further back than about the year 1000. Yet it soon outstripped its elders, and it did so solely by reason of its trade. Owing to the lateness of its rise, it was never a shire-town, and so had none of

the pre-eminence attached to an administrative centre. Although for a long period a castle of unusual strength held the entrance to the peninsula on which it stood, it was not like Gloucester or Warwick the head of a feudal lordship. Few towns had better natural defences, yet it was not like Pontefract a mere military post. Nowhere else probably did ecclesiastical buildings stand so thickly, yet it owed nothing to bishop or abbot. It became great because the convenience and safety of its river-harbour made it the chief port of western England, and while its merchants traded with many countries, its position as a western port has had a special influence on its history. It is to its connexion with the Ostmen of Ireland that its earliest rise should be referred, and this connexion led to trade with the Scandinavian countries. When our kings became lords of a vast dominion south of the Loire, Bristol became a principal depôt for the wines of the South. As the place of import for Irish wool, a chief seat of the production of cloth, and the mart and place of export for the manufactures of the clothing districts of the West, it extended its commerce to every country where English woollen goods were worn. And when the existence of the New World was revealed to Europe, Bristol seamen were the earliest discoverers of North America, and Bristol entered on a new era of prosperity, not, indeed, destined to continue in all its fulness, though it is now, as there is reason to believe, rapidly reviving.

The internal history of Bristol displays the rise of a mere member of a royal manor to the position of a town possessed of the fullest municipal rights, to the enjoyment of the independence involved in the organisation

of a county, and, finally, to the rank of a city; it will show us how a trading town contended with a formidable power stationed in its immediate neighbourhood, and ready to take advantage of domestic discord, and how it extended itself at the expense of a great feudal house; how the universal tendency of our English towns towards oligarchy was fiercely resisted, and how at last it finally triumphed. An attempt will be made to point out the share the town had in the greatest social revolution of the middle ages, what the effects of the Black Death were on its municipal government and its industrial arrangements. And, lastly, the history of the town should exhibit some of the special characteristics of its inhabitants, the munificence and public spirit of its merchant-princes, the eagerness of its people to receive new things whether in religion or politics, and their independent and often lawless spirit.

The first recorded fact in the history of Bristol is told us by two silver pennies, which belong to the reign of Æthelred the Unready (978–1016). These coins bear the inscription, ÆLFƿERD ON BRIC., signifying that they were struck by a moneyer named Ælfwerd at Bristol. This of course implies that Bristol was not even then a perfectly new settlement. Of its earlier history we know nothing. While traces of Roman occupation are found in great abundance in the immediate neighbourhood, there is nothing that tells us of any town. An ingenious theory attributes to the Church of St. Ewen, which once stood on the site of the present council-house, a dedication to a Welsh St. Howyn, and supposes that this marks that at the end of the sixth century the conquered Welsh were living

here side by side with their conquerors. While, however, there is some reason for believing that the dedication of the church is earlier than the Norman Conquest, it certainly cannot point to the presence of a Welsh settlement in the sixth century, and the entire silence of the chroniclers goes far to prove that there was no town of any importance here at the time when our forefathers conquered the land, or, indeed, until long afterwards. An undoubted fact is illustrated by the dedication of a church to St. Werburgh. The old town of Bristol stood wholly on the north of the Avon, on land that, in common with Gloucestershire generally, was colonised by the Hwiccan, a people that about 660 fell under the dominion of the Mercian king Wulfhere. The site of Bristol, then, was in Mercia, and the town was accordingly included in the Mercian diocese of Worcester, founded about 680. And as Werburh (St. Werburgh) was the daughter of Wulfhere, the church dedicated to her, which in our own day has been removed from its ancient place in Corn Street, points to the reverence paid to a Mercian saint in this border town of the Mercian kingdom and diocese. That it argues that the town was in existence when Mercia was an independent kingdom is, however, far more than can safely be asserted, for the date of the dedication is unknown. Men may, of course, have dwelt here long before the town first appears in history. A hint of this is perhaps to be found both in the name and in the topography of the town. The oldest form of the name is Bricgstow, and this most probably means the 'stow' or fenced place of the bridge. Before the Norman Conquest there could not have been many bridges in

England, for while place-names ending in 'ford' are plentiful, the compounds of 'bridge' are few. The particular form in which 'bridge' appears in Bricgstow is said to be early, and so perhaps points to an early settlement at the bridge end. Standing, then, upon the Avon, Bristol, like Bridgenorth on the Severn, and like Innsbrück on the Inn, was probably first known as the place where her river was crossed by a bridge; it was the point of communication between the two kingdoms of Mercia and Wessex, if indeed either Bristol or its bridge was in existence when Mercia and Wessex were separate kingdoms, and afterwards between the two shires of Gloucester and Somerset.

Now that the pennies of Ælfwerd have brought us to a fact and to an approximate date, it will be well to attempt to picture what Bristol was like in the eleventh century, when the town was already of sufficient importance to be the place of a mint. No city probably has so completely changed its physical features, for of the two rivers that then almost encircled it one, after having been turned into a new channel, has disappeared for a considerable extent of its course through the city, which now stretches far beyond it, and the other has also been made to run in an artificial channel, while its natural course now serves the artificial purpose of a floating harbour. Bristol both before and for a long period after the Norman Conquest was a Gloucestershire town, standing on a peninsula formed by the Avon and the Frome, and, as the point of junction between the two rivers is only twenty feet above the mean sea level, the tides rose high and the town had a good natural harbour.

At this time the Frome, which bounded two large

sides of the peninsula, probably flowed as it does now in a somewhat narrow valley between the Millstone Grit of St. Michael's Hill and the New Red Marls on which the old town was built, until it reached the eastern spur of the triangular hill of Trias Marls and Sandstones now called College Green. This spur turned the stream abruptly in a south-easterly direction, and so it flowed across Marsh Street and Back Street into the Avon, near the old churchyard of St. Nicholas. In early times, however, the river seems to have been tapped about the end of Small Street to form a millstream which ran through (old) Baldwin Street, drove Baldwin's Cross Mill, a name probably later than the Conquest, and so flowed into the Avon. After the new course of the Frome was dug in 1247–8, the old channel was still marked; for in the fifteenth century Marsh Street was also called Skadpulle Street, and a hundred years later great pools apparently stood in the course here indicated. The peninsula on which the town was built was mainly occupied by a hill of New Red Marls, of no great height, though somewhat steep, especially towards the Avon. On every side Bristol, which was then no doubt a walled town, was girt by her rivers, save on the east, where a neck of land joined the peninsula to the rest of Gloucestershire. Although the space enclosed by the two rivers was not large, it was not fully occupied. The extent of the town may be described as marked by St. John's Church on the north, by St. Nicholas on the south, and on the west by (old) Baldwin Street; while on the east it probably ended before reaching St. Peter's Church; covering in all less than twenty acres. Approaching the town from

Somerset on the south-west, the traveller would pass through the royal estate of Bedminster, then almost equally divided between woods and arable lands, he would walk along a causeway leading to the steep red cliff that was to give its name to the stately church of St. Mary, and he would here be in the vill of Redcliff, destined, under the great house of Berkeley, to rise to wealth and importance, to be a bone of contention between its feudal lords and the burgesses of Bristol, and finally to be absorbed by the older town. Then, as I venture to believe, he would find the road (now Redcliff Street) take him through a waste of marsh and wood lying between two reaches of the Avon, until it brought him to the head of a wooden bridge crossing the river where the present bridge now stands. On going over the bridge he would be at the foot of the steep hill on which the ancient town was built.

On the summit of the hill four streets still meet forming a carfax (quatre voies), and these divide the four ancient quarters of the town—the parishes of St. Mary-le-port, Trinity or Christ Church, St. Ewen's and All Saints. This division will help us to a theory as to the growth of the town. Important as Bristol certainly was in the eleventh century, its importance was of recent date; for in Domesday Book it still appears as a member of the royal manor of Barton, which lay to the east of it. Probably then we should look for the oldest part of the town in the quarter that ran above the river from Barton to the bridge. And this is not mere guesswork; for in the twelfth century St. Peter's Church, standing then inside the town, for the castle was then built and the eastern wall had disappeared, was said to be the

oldest church in Bristol. This church was probably outside the first circuit of wall, for it did not give its name to one of the quarters, and it may have been the old parish church of Barton. Beyond it stretched the neck of land soon to be occupied by the castle, and beyond again lay the site of a later settlement, a village and market (Old Market Street) that were to grow up as dependencies of the castle. In the quarter of St. Mary-le-port was the ancient market of the borough, answering to the Cheap of London. The name of the church of this ward seems simply to mark that it stood within the ancient bounds of the town, for 'port' is commonly used to signify a trading town, and is to be connected with Lat. *porta*, not *portus*. Whether then there was, as is generally asserted, some slip cut in the steep bank of the river which made the part below the church in any special way the port of Bristol, or no—and, considering the steepness of the bank, the tradition is doubtful—it is certain that the name St. Mary-le-port has nothing to do with a port for shipping. Just outside this quarter, in the carfax, stood Trinity Church, and here, as we learn from a deed of 1310, was the common bell whose sound called the burgesses to assemble in their 'moots' for the transaction of business. Over against it was the Church of St. Ewen, and hard by All Hallows or All Saints. The earliest inhabited part of Bristol, then, was perhaps that which lay above the river stretching eastward from Barton, and here the townsmen may have met for purposes of trade and government, when possibly the northern and western districts of the town, as it was at the time of the Conquest, still lay vacant. If this theory is correct, it

implies a long and gradual growth of Bristol. The four ways of the town still remain, and below that which ran eastward, called Wine, or more correctly Wynch, Street, for it held the wynch or pillory, lay the perhaps yet older street of St. Mary-le-port.

Along these main streets the houses of the burgesses stood closely side by side, built with timber frames filled in with boards or plastered clay, one story in height, and with sharply pitched roofs covered with tiles or thatch. Behind each of these would run a garden reaching back to a lane lined with the cottages of the labouring class. Outside the walls on the north, gardens probably sloped down to the Frome. On the other side of the river lay the meadow land that, as Lewin's Mead, still preserves the name of some native lord Leofwine; and above it rose the steep hill not yet crowned with the chapel of St. Michael, and to the east the bare ridge of Kingsdown. To the south-west, between the old course of the Frome and the Avon, stretched a wide marsh, bounded on the north by the triangular hill, now College Green, which was then part of the vill of Billeswick, and by the higher hill on which perhaps even then stood a chapel to St. Brendan, the Irish saint, whose name takes us back to a Christianity older than the mission of St. Augustine, and whose legendary voyage to the islands of the Blessed made him a special object of veneration to seamen, and above all to the seamen of Ireland, as they sailed beneath his hill to anchor in Bristol river. Further off lay the royal estate of Clifton, held in the time of Eadward the Confessor by Sewin, the king's reeve of Bristol, an office of which something must be said presently.

Whatever and whenever the beginning of Bristol may have been, it is evident that its importance in the eleventh century was of recent growth. And it almost certainly owed its rise to trade with the Northmen, or Ostmen as they were called, of the towns on the eastern and southern coasts of Ireland. Almost as soon as England had a western trade—as soon, that is, as commerce was carried on with Ireland—Bristol appears in our history as a trading mart, and trade with Ireland meant trade with the Scandinavian colonists, who were merchants as well as pirates. Passing by the records of the wars between the Norwegians and Danes in Ireland, we need only note that in the early part of the tenth century these Ostmen, who had already taken Dublin, established themselves in Waterford, and colonised or built other towns on the coast. During the reign of Eadgar, when the Danes and English lived at peace together in England, the Ostmen of Ireland minted coins at Dublin with the name of the English king, and immediately after this period we find Bristol of sufficient commercial importance to be the place of a mint. The connexion between the two countries was indirectly strengthened by the victory of Brian Borumha over the Ostmen at Clontarf in 1014; for as it confined the invaders to their towns on the coast, it probably increased their commercial energy, and it certainly brought them under the influence of Christianity. Accordingly we find Cnut's coins minted at Dublin, while many coins bearing his name and the names of his sons declare themselves struck at Bristol.

The first appearance of our town in written history is also in connexion with Ireland. In the reign of

Eadward the Confessor, Bristol was included in the earldom of Swegen, the eldest son of Earl Godwine, and when Godwine and his sons were outlawed by the assembly held at London on September 29, 1051, it chanced that Swegen had a ship lying in Bristol harbour. He and his brother Harold fled thither, and so sailed across to Ireland to take refuge with the King of Dublin. In the trade of Bristol with the Ostmen the chief articles of export were slaves, and it seems to have been on the worst form of this traffic that the early prosperity of the town was founded. Slavery was one of the primitive institutions of our race, and men were lawfully made slaves for many causes. After the introduction of Christianity, however, manstealing, and the sale of Christian and innocent persons out of the land, and especially to heathen men, were strictly forbidden. In spite of the laws on this subject, Bristol men kidnapped or bought the best of the youth of both sexes wherever they could. The slave was the most valuable chattel of the time, and a man fetched the price of six oxen. In the Bristol market, strings of young men and maidens stood tied together waiting to be bought. The girls were often kept for a while for immoral purposes, and then when pregnant were sold and shipped off to Ireland and other parts. Not even William the Conqueror was able to put a stop to this scandalous traffic. At last Wulfstan, the bishop of Worcester, took up the matter. He spent sometimes two, and sometimes three months at a time in the town, preaching there every Sunday, and at last succeeded in bringing the merchants to a better mind. They gave up their wicked trade, and one who refused to be persuaded was, it is said, blinded and

driven from the town by the rest. This reformation, however, did not last long.

Before the end of the century Irish ships entered the Avon for other purposes than trade. Bristol took no part in the resistance offered to the Norman Conqueror. As merchants and seamen her inhabitants probably had little interest in the fate of the land generally. Nor is it likely that strangers would be looked upon with the suspicion their presence excited in inland towns; they must have been often seen in the Bristol streets and have been welcomed as a source of wealth. At the same time the townsmen showed that they could defend themselves when occasion demanded. And this they were called on to do in 1068, for in that year three sons of Harold, who, like their father before them, had fled to Dublin, entered the Avon with a fleet of fifty-two ships manned with Irish, and harried the country. These Irish seamen of course knew Bristol well, and no doubt longed to sack the town. They made an attack upon it by land, but the townsmen resisted them stoutly and beat them off. From Bristol then, as we are told, 'they could win nothing,' so they betook themselves to their ships again. They landed in Somerset, and were met by an English force under a leader whose descendants for many generations were destined to be closely connected with Bristol. This was Eadnoth, once King Harold's 'staller,' or master of horse, who fell in this battle, and whose son Harding was alive when William of Malmesbury wrote his history in the days of Henry II.

All, and it is but little, that we know of the administration of the town before the Conquest comes to

us from Domesday Book. The entry concerning Bristol is under the heading 'In Bertune at Bristou,' and it runs in English: 'This manor and Bristou pay the King c & x marks of silver; the burgesses say that Bishop G[eoffrey of Coutances] has xxxiii marks of silver and one mark of gold, besides the King's ferm.' Here, then, is a proof that Bristol was not a place of ancient importance, for it is assessed along with the king's manor of Barton. It belonged to the crown. Bristol histories have a great deal to say about certain lords of the town before the Conquest, Aylward Snew and his descendant Brihtric. Now Aylward Snew is altogether too shadowy a personage to trouble ourselves about, and though Brihtric certainly was a real person, there is nothing that connects his name with Bristol. The king was the lord of the town, as he was of the manor of which it had once been a mere appendage. Those times had now passed, and Bristol comes before us as a borough; for we find the burgesses acting together in making answer to the enquiries of the Domesday commissioners in 1086, and this they did through a sworn jury chosen from among themselves. Now a borough, though it often included several townships or parishes, and sometimes other divisions, also had a common organisation of somewhat the same character as that of the hundred. In Bristol, as elsewhere, the rights of the lord, both as regards jurisdiction and revenue, were exercised by an officer called in Latin *præpositus*, the provost, and in English *gerefa*, the reeve or steward. This reeve was nominally appointed by the lord, though the office, like offices generally at that time, had a tendency to become

hereditary. In some cases indeed the king's reeves held a position that was practically little different from that held by feudal lords. The king's reeve collected the king's dues from the tenants of the crown demesne over which he was set, and paid them over to the sheriff. The large sum paid to Bishop Geoffrey out of the king's dues has led to the idea that he held some office in Bristol, and though he certainly was not earl of Gloucestershire, nor the lord, nor the reeve of the town, he may have had some of an earl's rights there. As the sum paid by the reeve to the crown was fixed in amount, he had considerable opportunities of enriching himself. The borough court, or hundred court of the town over which he presided, was composed of the burgesses, the owners of land, shops, or houses, for which they paid rent to the lord. They formed the governing body of the town, acting with and under the reeve. In the time of the Confessor the office of reeve of Bristol was, as we have seen, held by Sewin. After the Conquest, Harding, the son of Eadnoth, is supposed to have held it. This may, or may not, be true. It is likely enough, for we know that it was held by his younger son, the famous Robert FitzHarding. If Harding held it, he was just the kind of man to make it profitable. He was rich and powerful, and William of Malmesbury describes him as shrewd and litigious, 'more used to whet his tongue in suits-at-law than to wield his weapons in war.' The burgesses of Bristol, however, doubtless knew how to maintain their rights.

CHAPTER II.

THE CASTLE.

Geoffrey of Coutances—Robert of Gloucester—'The Bristol war'—Robert FitzHarding—Colonisation of Dublin—John, lord of Bristol—The Jewry—The Barons' war—Parliamentary representation—Growth of population outside the walls—'Old Market Street'—Monastic institutions—Increase of the area of the town—Temple fee—Redcliff.

GEOFFREY of Coutances, who in 1086 was in receipt of almost a third of the revenue arising from the town, was probably the builder of Bristol Castle. It stood on the rising ground of the isthmus that connected the town with the rest of Gloucestershire; it held the only road by which Bristol could be approached by land; it commanded the harbour, and, having a river on either side, was well furnished with water defences. What the bishop's castle was like we are not told, though it is said to have been of exceeding strength in 1088. To Geoffrey too must probably be attributed the building of the outer wall of the town, that started from the Newgate at the north-west corner of the castle, marked by some houses in Castle Mill Street, still called 'under Newgate,' and that followed the course of the Frome to the bridge at the end of Christmas Street. This wall took in the district called the Pithay (pit-hedge, or well-close), and all the land on the north between the old

wall and the Frome. It was broken by the Pithay gate and bridge, the remains of which have been discovered underground in Union Street, and probably later by a bridge leading to St. James's Priory. Geoffrey soon found his fortifications useful, for he and his nephew Robert of Mowbray joined the rebellion of the Norman nobles against William Rufus, and his new castle formed a splendid base for harrying the shires between which it stood. Somerset was attacked by Robert of Mowbray, who, at the head of a force partly composed, no doubt, of Bristol men, burnt and plundered Bath, and, after doing more mischief of the same sort, was finally foiled in an attack on Ilchester. Meanwhile his ally William of Eu marched on Gloucestershire, plundered the king's vill of Berkeley, and destroyed a little castle that had been built there. There was probably a special reason for this attack. Berkeley was not yet held by the great house with which its name has so long been connected; at this time it was farmed of the crown by Roger of Berkeley, and as Roger was also reeve of Barton, his jurisdiction must have reached up to the walls of Bristol Castle, and so no doubt there were causes of dispute between him and Bishop Geoffrey. Both Robert of Mowbray and William of Eu brought the abundant spoil they gathered into Bristol. The rebellion was quelled, and its failure was to some extent due to the loyalty of Bishop Wulfstan.

On the death of Geoffrey, in 1093, Bristol Castle was placed in the keeping of Robert FitzHamon, one of the few Norman lords who had been faithful to Rufus. He appears also to have held Bristol of the king; for, besides endowing the abbey he founded at Tewkesbury with

St. Peter's Church, he also gave it a tithe of the rents of the town. The possession of Bristol as a place of arms and as a port must have considerably aided him in the wars he carried on with the Welsh ; he conquered Glamorgan and established himself at Cardiff. He died of a wound he received while fighting for King Henry against Duke Robert at Tinchebrai. In this battle the Duke was taken prisoner, and was kept in Bristol and in other castles until his death. At Robert Fitz-Hamon's death the king became guardian of his heiress Mabel, and as Henry wanted her lands for his natural son Robert of Caen, he brought about a marriage between Robert and the heiress. Of this marriage the riming chronicler Robert of Gloucester tells a famous story. Mabel objected to marry a man who had no second name ; for, though regular surnames were not then used, all men of good birth were known by a second name, either marking their parentage or derived from some lordship, and Mabel held that it would be shameful

Vor to abbe an louerd bote he adde an tuo name.

On this Henry, it is said, declared that his son, who by the way had been born before he became king, should be called 'Fitz le Roy.' The lady liked the name well enough, but observed that it could not descend to any son he might have, and the king then said that he should be Earl of Gloucester. Robert accordingly married Mabel, inherited her father's possessions, and was made earl probably in 1121. Under Robert the castle became, on the whole, what it was up to its destruction in the seventeenth century. Strong as Geoffrey's castle was held to be, Robert built a fortress of a newer type.

On a vast mound facing the eastern side of the town, where the wall had probably been removed by Bishop Geoffrey, at the summit of the ascent of the present Castle Street, he raised a square keep, the largest in the kingdom save the keeps of Colchester and the Tower of London, and added to the east of it a chapel dedicated to St. Martin. In the inner ward was a splendid banqueting hall, of which the thirteenth-century entrance may yet be seen in Tower Street. Besides this, the substructure of the chapel, and a large room in Castle Street overhanging the southern ditch, there is little now to be seen of this famous stronghold.

The weakness and imprudence of Stephen brought a period of anarchy on England, in which for a time Bristol played a conspicuous part. Before entering on an account of what is called in one chronicle the 'Bristol war,' the special chronicler of Stephen's deeds gives a description of the town as it was in his day. He says that it was almost the richest city of the country, for ships brought home and foreign merchandise into it, that it stood in a specially fertile district, and had the strongest site of any city in England. He compares it with Brundisium, and says that it was built on a tongue-shaped piece of land, which, after stretching for some length between two rivers, fell away at their point of junction. This shows us that, though part of the water of the Frome was diverted to form the mill-stream that ran under the western wall of the town, the main body of its water still flowed in its natural course through the marsh. Twice in the twenty-four hours the waters of both rivers were turned back by a quick and strong tide, so that a deep

harbour was made, such as would receive a thousand ships, while the whole city seemed 'to float on the waters and to be seated on their banks.' He speaks of the castle as standing on a mighty mound, well fortified with towers, bastions, and machines of war, and now garrisoned with a crowd 'of knights and foot-soldiers, or rather with robbers and raiders,' who flocked from every shire and district 'to serve a rich lord and to have the shelter of a strong fortress, and who now worked their will in the most fertile part of England.'

This lawless state of things seems to have begun in May 1138, when the earl, who was then in Normandy, determined on maintaining the claim of his sister, the empress (the Countess of Anjou), to the throne, and sent his defiance to Stephen. In answer Stephen seized his possessions. Bristol, however, was too strong for the king, and the inhabitants of the town, probably, as well as the garrison of the castle made war on their neighbours. Hoping to repeat their exploit of 1088, they suddenly attacked Bath. On this occasion, however, they were unsuccessful; for the soldiers of Bishop Robert were ready for them, and their leader was taken and thrown into a dungeon. In another expedition the Bristol men caught the Bishop of Bath, and by threatening him with the gallows compelled him to release their leader and to ransom himself. They harried the lands of the king's party everywhere, and seized on all the wealthy men they could catch, blindfolded and gagged them, and so brought them into Bristol, where they forced them by torture and starvation to pay all that they had as ransom. Nor did they take

these prisoners merely in open war; for some of them took advantage of the state of the country to carry on their old trade of kidnapping; they went into districts that were at peace and caught men by craft, and if they failed to pay the ransom demanded of them probably shipped them off to Ireland, so that Bristol was called 'the stepmother of all England.' Bath was threatened with destruction, and Stephen collected an army to save it from its dangerous neighbour. He laid siege to Bristol Castle and called a council of war to decide on operations. The story makes it plain that the town was held to be impregnable, that her rivers were sufficient to protect her on every side save where the castle shut the only approach by land. Some advised the king to place a dam across the Avon, for the Bristol men made their expeditions mainly by water. Others thought it would be better to blockade the town by building fortifications to guard the two bridges over the Avon and the Frome, while the king encamped before the castle. This mention of these two bridges proves that, though there may have been others, as that leading from the Pithay, the two on the northern and southern sides of the town were alone of any considerable size. Among the barons of the king's army, however, there were many who were at heart on the earl's side, and they persuaded Stephen to raise the siege. He led his army against the castles of Cary and Harptree, which were held by allies of Earl Robert. These he soon reduced; for, though the Bristol men were strong enough to offer a formidable resistance behind their walls, they did not venture to meet the king in the open field. Stephen made a fatal mistake in leaving

Bristol unsubdued, and it is not too much to say that the troubles that came upon him and upon England during the next sixteen years arose from it. That he would have succeeded if he had persevered in the siege there can be little doubt; for the defences of Bristol could scarcely have been stronger than those of Exeter, which he had taken three years before, and when the stronghold of their great ally had fallen, petty lords like those of Cary and Harptree would have given no trouble. As it was, he left Earl Robert the most important of all his possessions, a secure place of arms, situated so as to enable him to maintain communications with the districts where his chief strength lay, with Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, and the military settlements in Wales.

Earl Robert was not slow to take advantage of the king's mistake. In September 1139 he and the empress landed in England, and soon afterwards entered Bristol. Thither Stephen was brought as a captive after the battle of Lincoln, in February 1141, and was lodged in the castle. At first the king was treated honourably, being in modern phrase put on his parole; as, however, he was found beyond bounds one night—at least so it is said—he was placed in fetters. His imprisonment ended in the autumn, for he was exchanged for the earl, who in his turn had been taken prisoner. At the close of the next year, Geoffrey of Anjou sent his son Henry to England at the request of his uncle Robert, who felt that the lad's presence would strengthen his cause, for many people looked on him as their future king. Henry, who was then nine years old, was received by the earl at Bristol, and stayed

there four years. Earl Robert, who was himself a scholar as well as a warrior, did not let him waste his time; he provided a tutor for him, named Matthew, who instructed him in book learning and in all noble conduct such as became a boy of his rank. Matthew was no doubt a good master; at all events his pupil grew into a man of cultivated tastes, fond of reading and of the conversation of learned men.

Earl Robert died in 1147, and was succeeded by his son William. Other great men also died on both sides, and when Henry, then duke of Normandy, came to England a third time, in 1152, his final success was certain. Meanwhile a power was being built up that was destined for two hundred years to exercise considerable influence on the history of Bristol. Robert FitzHarding, a younger son of Harding, like his grandfather, and probably his father before him, was the reeve of the town. He was on the side of Earl Robert, and must have been a useful ally, for he was possessed of immense wealth. He bought many estates, chiefly from the earl, and among them were Billeswick, where he raised the abbey of St. Augustine, now the cathedral, and the manor of Bedminster, which included the vill of Redcliff, already probably a town of some size, and soon to become the rival of Bristol itself. He gave much help to Henry, probably on his coming to England for the third time, and was nobly rewarded for it. Roger of Berkeley, heir of the Roger of whom we have already heard, upheld the cause of Stephen, and was accordingly dispossessed by Henry, who granted Berkeley to Robert FitzHarding as a fief. Two marriages made peace between the house of the ancient reeves and the

new lord of Berkeley. Maurice, the son of Robert Fitz-Harding, married Roger's daughter, and Roger's son married Robert's daughter. Roger lost Berkeley by the first year of Henry's reign, and the after history of his house does not concern us.

During the reign of Henry II. the long connexion between Bristol and Ireland assumed a new phase. As early as 1155, Hadrian IV. granted Ireland to Henry, and in 1166 an event happened which at last enabled the king to take advantage of this grant. In that year there landed at Bristol Dermod MacMurrough, king of Leinster, who had been driven from his kingdom, and who came seeking help from the English king. Henry, who was then in Aquitaine, engaged in other matters, gave Dermod license to raise a force among his subjects; and with this Dermod returned to Bristol. While he was there Richard, earl of Strigoil (called Strongbow), came from his castle of Chepstow to visit him, and promised to bring a force over to Ireland to help him. An invasion of Ireland was made by adventurers of Norman descent, who took Wexford, Waterford, and Dublin. The Irish clergy agreed that the troubles of their land were sent as a punishment for keeping so many Englishmen in slavery—an illustration of the increase of the Bristol slave-trade during the anarchy, and ordered that they should all be set free. Henry now interfered to prevent the establishment of an independent Norman settlement, which would have endangered the peace of England, and went over to Ireland to receive the homage of his vassals, and make their conquests his own. He spent the winter of 1171–1172 in Dublin, and while he was there he granted

a charter to the men of Bristol, giving them the city of Dublin to inhabit 'with all the liberties and free customs which they have at Bristow and through my whole land.'

Bristol men had probably helped in the work of conquest, especially by supplying ships, and now they received their reward; they were to colonise the chief city of the conquered land. The colonists dwelt side by side with the remainder of the Ostmen, who for a time continued to some extent a separate people, assessed with the English, but named separately. Dublin became a city neither wholly Irish nor wholly English; its citizens paid their taxes to the English exchequer, and for a long time kept up a close connexion with Bristol. Of this connexion the dedication of St. Werburgh's church in Dublin is an interesting illustration. The charters granted by John to Dublin in 1192 and 1200 are based upon, and refer to, a charter which, as we shall see in the next chapter, he granted to his burgesses of Bristol in 1188; and with reference to this it may be noted that a special connexion between the two towns existed in the person of John, at once Earl of Gloucester and Lord of Ireland. A list of citizens of Dublin, apparently before the end of the twelfth century, which has lately been discovered and published, makes it doubtful whether any large number of Bristol men availed themselves of the right of colonisation. The 'to-names,' to use the Lady Mabel's phrase, are in many cases descriptive of personal appearance or circumstances. 'White,' for example, is common; and in one case a man is evidently known as 'Outlaw.' Trades too supply many designations, such as Tailor, Lorimer, and Butcher. Of the large number

called from places, most of the colonists are marked as natives of the West country; they are of Gloucester, Cardiff, and so on. Fourteen only are called 'de Bristoll.' This, however, does not prove anything. Many who have no local designation may have belonged to Bristol families. Among these it is interesting to mark 'John, son of Jordan, son of (*filius* or fitz) Harding'; the form is worth notice, as showing how early the famous name FitzHarding began to be used as a real surname, something a little different from a 'to-name.' Nor do even local designations such as have been mentioned prove that the bearer was not a Bristol man; his father or his grandfather may have left Gloucester or Cardiff, and become a burgess of Bristol. Henry's grant of Dublin was confirmed by John when he was at Kildare, in 1185. In thinking of the Dublin of the Bristol men, we need not trouble ourselves about the native Irish; they were not dwellers in towns, and when the adventurers took the city, they took it not from them, but from the Ostmen. After the conquest, the Irish dwelt, as they had probably dwelt before, in a village or quarter of their own outside the city.

Chief among the causes of dispute between the barons and the king was the right of the Crown to place garrisons in all the castles in the kingdom. This right, enforced whenever the royal administration was vigorous, saved the country from feudal anarchy. It was not exercised during the reign of Stephen, and when Henry insisted on it, his action in this, as well as in other measures for curbing the great feudatories, offended them deeply. In 1173 the Norman lords, here and on the other side of the Channel, rebelled

against him, and though William of Gloucester did not openly join the rebels, he expelled the royal garrison from Bristol, and held the castle on his own account. The rapid success of Henry's arms, however, decided his course; he took the king's side, and when the war was over, again admitted a garrison into his castle. As the earl had no son, each of his three daughters would on his death have had a claim to a share in his possessions, and the king would have had the right to dispose of the hand of the one that was unmarried. He therefore agreed that his daughter, Hawisia or Isabel, should marry the king's son, John, and made him his heir. The earl died in 1183, and on his father's death John married Hawisia, and so inherited the lordship of Bristol and the rest of the earl's possessions. After he became king, he divorced Hawisia on the ground of nearness of blood, and made a more splendid match, the source of many future troubles, with Isabella of Angoulême. In 1214 the divorced lady married Geoffrey Mandeville. In giving up her inheritance to her new husband, John retained Bristol with the castle and forests pertaining to it. The possession of the castle was evidently a matter of first-rate importance during the reign of Richard. In the struggle that was carried on between John and Longchamp, the chief justiciar, during Richard's absence from the kingdom, it is evident that the townsmen were on John's side, and, as we shall see in the next chapter, they had good reason for upholding their lord. When John heard of Richard's captivity and openly rebelled, they showed their sympathy with his cause by treating the king's justices with disrespect when they came

down to Bristol to hold the assize, and were fined 100*l.* for their contempt. Many of John's castles were reduced by the time the king landed, and among these probably was Bristol; for in 1196 Richard d'Orescuilz, who was perhaps castellan for the Count of Mortain, the title John bore before his accession, was fined 100*s.* for the part he had taken in the siege.

Both as earl and as king, John was often at Bristol, and the town was the scene of one of his most notable acts of cruelty, the torture of a Jew. The coming of the Jews into England was a consequence of the Norman Conquest. It is, of course, impossible to prove that there were no Jews here in earlier days, but there are no signs of their presence, and it may safely be asserted that they were not here in any number before that time. Their position here was peculiar, for they were outside the law of the land and of the Church. They were the king's chattels, under his protection, and subject to his will. They had the monopoly of the trade in money, for usury was forbidden to Christian men. At any moment the king could demand what he pleased of them, and as they carried on a risky business they naturally charged enormous interest. They lived wholly in towns, and everywhere occupied a separate quarter. In Bristol the Jewry lay on the Quay between Broad Street and Small Street; it seems probable that, after the second wall of defence was built, this angle outside the old wall remained void, and that, after they were settled there, their quarter was defended by a prolongation of the second wall to meet the earlier one. They had a synagogue in the substructure of St. Giles's Church, at the bottom of Small Street, so at

least men said in the fifteenth century, and as the church appears to have been disused about the time of their expulsion, the statement has some corroboration. The Jews were much hated for their extortion; but while the king made them give him whatever he demanded, he took care that no one else should injure them, for they were the most profitable possession of the Crown. Accordingly, in 1177, the burgesses of Bristol were fined 80 marks for 'Sturmis the usurer,' a Jew whom they probably had slain. The name borne by this usurer is noteworthy; for in 1286 a Robert Sturmy of Bristol was by the king's order protected from the extortionate demands of a Jew: he was probably a relation of Sir John Sturmy, one of the admirals of the fleet in 1314 and later, who may, therefore, have belonged to the Bristol family of Sturmy, one of the foremost among the merchant houses of the town in the fifteenth century. It is possible, though scarcely probable, that these men were of Jewish descent. There was, however, in Bristol a place where the Jews might be instructed in the Christian faith; this was a school founded for that purpose by Robert FitzHarding, and at first held in Checquer Hall, in Wine Street.

The protection our kings afforded the Jews was only to enable them to meet the demands they made upon them. In 1210 John ordered that all the Jews throughout England should be seized and forced to ransom themselves, and so took 66,000 marks from them. It is evident that the Bristol Jewry was remarkably wealthy; for from one old man was demanded a sum of 10,000 marks, probably the amount levied on the community of which he was the head. He refused to ransom himself

at such a price, and was tortured in vain. Then the king ordered that one of his teeth should be struck out each day until he paid it. The wretched man yielded on the eighth day. One cause of the hatred that was felt against the Jews was that they sold the lands that were mortgaged to them without giving the mortgagors time to pay off their debts, a proceeding that was far more startling and far more disastrous to the debtor in the days of feudalism than it would be now. Roger of Berkeley, the representative of the dispossessed house, was in some fear lest he should be served in this way, and paid a sum into the Exchequer in order that John might make the Jews of Bristol and Gloucestershire, to whom he had mortgaged his estates, leave him in possession, and allow him to pay off his debt by yearly instalments. It is worth notice that the Jews are here spoken of, as is often the case when large transactions are referred to, as trading, not as individuals, but as communities, and that the Jewry of Bristol formed a separate community from that of the shire. Sales of land by the Jews are a matter of some importance in our national history; for they enabled the great nobles to extend their estates at the expense of the smaller landowners, or, as we should call them, country gentry; and as the manors that Roger wished to keep were in Gloucestershire, it is quite possible that he feared that they might go to the house that had already displaced him at Berkeley. The rise of the gentry into political importance in the thirteenth century caused this grievance to be brought prominently forward, and an attempt was made to remedy it in the famous Parliament held at Oxford in 1258. For many reasons

the presence of the Jews and the position they held were felt to be a national grievance, and Edward I. gratified all classes when he banished them from the kingdom. The Bristol Jewry, in common with those all through the kingdom, was cleared of its inhabitants by November 1, 1290.

During the period of the Great Charter Bristol, with the West country generally, upheld the royal cause. The revenues of the town were let to Engelard of Cigoine, sheriff of Gloucestershire, and though the burgesses probably had much to complain of, he doubtless kept them in entire submission; for he was one of the mercenaries who were the ministers of John's despotism, and his banishment was expressly stipulated for in the Great Charter. The rapid success of Lewis of France, in the summer of 1216, forced John for the moment to fall back on the West, in order to strengthen his strongholds there, as a preparation for an attack on his enemies in the Eastern counties. He spent a few days at Bristol, put the castle in a state of defence, and then passed into Dorset. On his death, the faithfulness of the West may be said to have secured the succession of Henry III., by affording the royal party a basis for its operations. Immediately after the coronation of the young king at Gloucester, Hubert de Burgh and the other lords who upheld his cause summoned a council to meet at Bristol. At this council arrangements were made for the government of the kingdom, and for the first time the Great Charter was reissued as a pledge of the line the king's ministers would adopt. Henry paid two other visits to Bristol in the early part of his reign. When he came for the third

time in 1224, the castle contained an illustrious prisoner, his cousin Eleanor, daughter of Geoffrey of Brittany, and sister of Arthur, who was kept here until her death, because her descent from Henry II. made it possible that at some time or other she might be used as a means of disturbing the government. She was not kept in close confinement, and minute instructions were given to the reeves of the town as to the clothes which they were ordered to provide for her and her attendants.

The general maladministration of the reign of Henry III. at last led to an open war between the king and the barons. In this quarrel, many in Bristol, as in most other towns, took up the cause of the national party, headed by Simon of Montfort, Earl of Leicester. The war began in 1263. Edward, the king's son, lay at Windsor, with a fine body of troops, composed chiefly of foreigners whom he had brought over from France. On his marriage, the king had given him Bristol 'with its appurtenances,' the castle, the forest of Kingswood and other lands. The possession of Bristol was now again a matter of first-rate importance. The lords of the Welsh Marches were on the side of Edward, who was himself the strongest Marcher among them, so that he was called the 'lord of Wales.' On the other hand, Llewelyn was, of course, at deadly war with them, the Earl of Gloucester was a leader of the baronial party, and Earl Simon had already reduced many of the castles on the border, so that it seemed probable that Edward's allies would be hemmed in and crushed. He hoped to use Bristol as a basis for attacking the Welsh and the Earl of Gloucester, and for the relief of the Marchers. Accordingly he led his troops thither, and stayed some

days in the castle, putting it in a state of defence. While he was there, the townsmen came to blows with his soldiers, and evidently had the better of the quarrel, for he and his men shut themselves into the castle. The townsmen cast off his authority, and were on the point of besieging him when he retreated in haste, apparently leaving a garrison behind him. After the victory of the baronial party at Lewes, some of Edward's knights, who had taken refuge in Bristol Castle, made an attempt to deliver him from his captivity at Wallingford, and held the castle some time, until at last they were authorised to surrender it by Edward himself. The townsmen obtained a pardon from the king, who was wholly in the earl's power, for the part they had taken in the war.

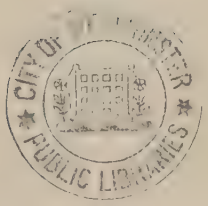
The battle of Lewes was followed by the Parliament of 1265, to which every city and borough was called on to send two members. Unfortunately the names of the members have not been preserved, so we cannot say who the first representatives of Bristol were. At the end of May, Edward escaped and joined Gilbert of Gloucester and the lords of his party in the Marches. An order sent by Earl Simon, in the king's name, bidding the garrison of Bristol hold the castle against him, seems to have come too late. Still, though they did not shut their gates against Edward and his allies, they, like the townsmen, were heart and soul for the earl. It was not long before messengers from the earl came to Bristol, praying his friends to send all the transport ships they could muster without delay to Newport. He and his men were caught in a trap. Edward and Earl Gilbert had broken all the bridges across the Severn and the

Wye, and he was hemmed in by the line of the Severn: all the ships had been removed from the river, and all the fords deepened, so as to render them impracticable. Cut off from communication with the main body of his troops, which was with his son in the east of England, and with the force he had growing weaker every day for lack of rest and proper food, the earl was almost in despair. If he could but get to Bristol, all might yet be well. He occupied Newport, one of Earl Gilbert's towns, and there waited for help. The ships were promptly sent, and the embarkation began. Suddenly three galleys belonging to the Earl of Gloucester attacked the transport fleet. Gilbert had heard of the attempt that was being made in Bristol to rescue Earl Simon; he filled three of his ships of war with armed men, and he and Edward embarked with them. Eleven of the Bristol ships, which were of course merely cargo vessels, such as Earl Simon had asked for, were either sunk or taken. Edward and the Earl of Gloucester landed, and set their battle in array; Simon was forced across the Usk, and broke the bridge behind him to prevent the enemy pressing into Newport. The attempt of the Bristol men to save him was in vain, and on August 4 he fell at Evesham. It is asserted, and though there seems no direct evidence for the assertion it may, considering what happened in other cases, be received as probable, that the town purchased peace by payment of a heavy fine.

While the reign of Edward I. was a period of considerable interest as regards the internal life of Bristol, it affords few points of connexion between the history of the town and that of the nation at large. The cap-

ture of Eleanor, the daughter of Earl Simon, when she was on her voyage to meet her betrothed husband, Llewelyn of Wales, is no great matter. Some events bearing on the rise of parliamentary representation are of more importance. Edward's work in the formation of Parliament as an assembly of estates, containing members representing the principles of a national senate, of class representation, and of local delegacy, was accomplished gradually. Both before and after it was brought to perfection, Parliaments were held in which one or other of these principles is not to be found. After the subjugation of Wales in 1284, the king spent his Christmas in Bristol, and during his stay held an assembly described as a 'special and particular, not a general Parliament,' which was probably in the nature of the solemn courts that in older times used to be held at the three great festivals of each year. Our parliamentary system was fully developed in the Parliament of 1295, and to this Bristol, in common with other boroughs, sent two representatives. The name of one of these burgesses, John Taverner, has been preserved; he afterwards played a conspicuous part in the greatest crisis in the history of his town.[1] In spite of this important advance in the growth of our constitution, the maxim implied in the Confirmation of the Charters, that all taxation must be by common assent, was neither definitely laid down nor strictly

[1] By comparing the returns of members with the list of mayors, bailiffs, and the like, it is evident that, though the parliamentary representatives were chosen from the richer burgesses, the class which supplied the municipal offices, they were not, generally at least, officers of the borough at the time of their election. John Taverner, who sat for Bristol in the parliaments of 1295, 1298, and 1306, was a steward in 1293 and mayor in 1308, 1309, and 1313.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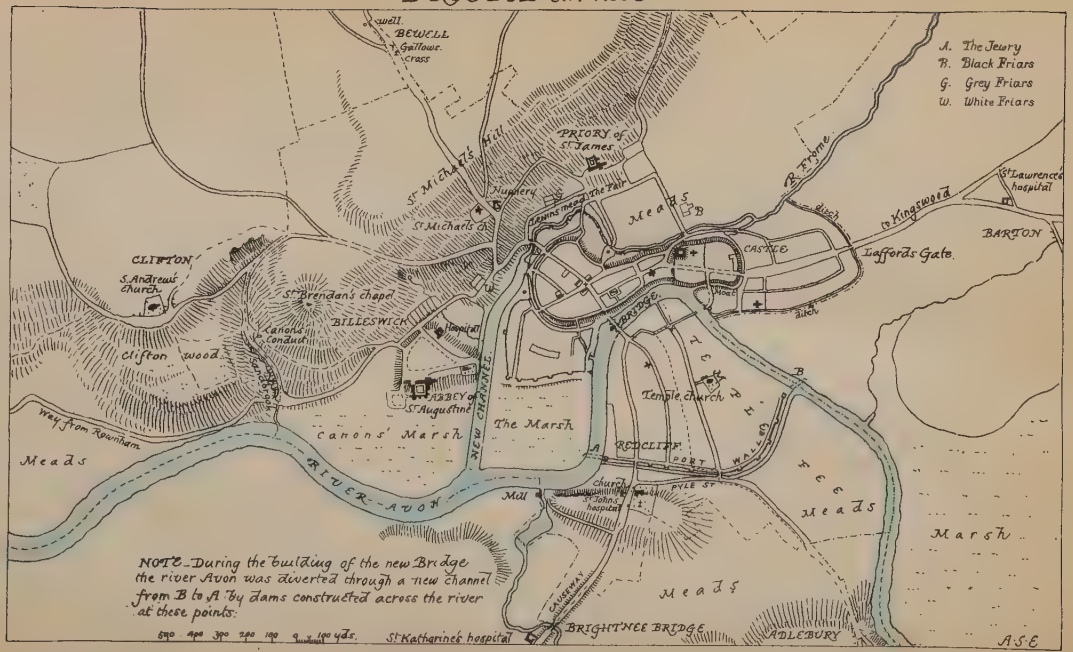

observed. In 1303, for example, the king, who made his own bargains with the foreign merchants as to the customs, called on Bristol and the other merchant towns to send two members to an assembly consisting only of merchants, and to them he proposed that they should grant him the same customs that the foreigners had agreed to pay. This, however, they refused. Again, the next year, on his return from the Scotch war, he exercised the old feudal right of taking a tallage from the towns in his demesne, and on this account Bristol paid 400*l.* into the Exchequer.

The growth of the town during the two centuries and a half that followed the building of the castle may to some extent be illustrated by the ecclesiastical foundations within and around the walls. Here, as elsewhere, the Conquest ushered in an age of church-building. Of the churches within the walls, St. Peter's was rebuilt by Robert FitzHamon, St. Ewen's by Robert of Gloucester, and St. Mary-le-port by his son William. Trinity Church and All Saints were rebuilt in the same period, and other churches were raised, some in Norman and some in later days. Norman masonry may be seen in the tower of St. Peter's, and massive cylindrical piers in All Saints.

Although at the close of the thirteenth century Bristol proper was still confined to a narrow area, new settlements had been formed on every side of it. Some of these evidently owed their origin to the monastic foundations that now encircled the town, others rose from other causes. Beginning at the east, the first nucleus of a new suburb is to be found in the castle. A settlement of considerable size grew up on the further

side of the castle in a kind of quadrilateral formed by the Frome and a ditch. On the eastern reach of this ditch was Lawford's Gate. In spite of the general agreement that Lawford is a corruption of *hlaford* or lord, it is impossible to admit the lengthening of the first syllable. What the name comes from is hard to say, and it is with some hesitation that I venture to suggest that it may be connected with law- (boundary) ditch. This Norman village had its own market, the 'Old Market,' and the spiritual wants of the people were provided for by the church of SS. Philip and Jacob. The earliest monastic house after the Conquest, the Benedictine priory of St. James, was built by Robert of Gloucester on the lower slope of Kingsdown; the west front, the arcades, and the clerestory of the original church are still preserved. A fair which in one form or other was held until fifty years ago was granted to the monks, and the memory of the priory farm is still preserved by the name of the 'Barton.' Round the priory a village grew up, at first probably inhabited only by the dependents of the house, who naturally used the monastic church. In time, however, the population increased, and the monks wished to forbid the laity the use of their high altar, as happened at Dunster and other places. An arrangement was therefore made by which the church was divided, the parishioners had the western part, and built a belfry-tower, which was to be used by both parties in common, and the monks kept the eastern part of the building for themselves, together with the Lady chapel that Earl Robert is said to have built by giving for the work every tenth stone of those he brought from Caen to build the keep of his castle.

After the Dissolution the monastic part of the building was removed; the western part, or parish church, still remains. Only a word can be said of the Dominican friary founded about 1230 in Marshall Street, the road leading from the castle up to the jousting field on Prior's Hill above St James's, and thence on to Gloucester, or of the Franciscans in Lewin's Mead, or of the nunnery of St. Mary Magdalene at the foot of St. Michael's Hill, or of the Carmelites, the site of whose house is now occupied by Colston's Hall, or of the hospital of the Bons Hommes built by Robert FitzHarding in his vill of Billeswick, the chapel of which is now used as the mayor's chapel. Hard by, and just above the marsh to the north of the Avon, stood Robert's convent of Augustinian canons, the present cathedral. And this noble foundation, of which the Norman gateway and chapter-house still remain, must have caused a considerable increase in the population of the township in which it stood. Thus during the thirteenth century new settlements were rising round the wall of the town to the north of the Avon.

An enlargement of the walled area of Bristol on the south was the result of a remarkable enterprise carried out in the reign of Henry III. Hitherto the only harbour was in the Avon, and the rapidity with which the tide of the river ebbed often left vessels stranded and strained. To remedy this, the townsmen bought the eastern part of the marsh from St. Augustine's Abbey, and cut a new and wide channel for the Frome straight through it, making the present course of the river. They filled up the old channel and completed the work which gave them a good harbour and quay, in 1248, at a cost of 5,000*l.*—a large sum of money in

those days. By this alteration Billeswick was more completely cut off from the town than it had been by the mill-stream and the half-empty and narrow channel of the river, and the monks of St. Augustine's being unwilling to allow their tenants, whose houses were now probably lying thickly about the precincts, to use their church, built St. Augustine's the Less for their accommodation. The digging of the harbour was followed by the building of a new wall along the quay and across the middle of the marsh, almost on the line of King Street, which added a considerable district to the area of the town. This was soon filled with houses, and the next few years must have been a busy time for the builders. Nor must their activity be measured only by the increase of the town. Most of the houses were still built of wood, and consequently fires were frequent. Three of these, recorded by the Tewkesbury chronicler, must have been serious. In 1200 we have the simple entry 'Bristol was burnt'; the year 1237 was probably more disastrous, for it was marked by two fires, so that 'a great part of the town lay in ashes.' Of course the loss was more easily repaired than it could have been in the case of stone buildings; still it must have been heavy, and these entries increase one's idea of the wealth and energy of men who so soon afterwards carried out vast undertakings.

Another of these undertakings, the building of the new bridge, yet remains to be spoken of. The increase of population outside the walls on the northern side of the Avon is of less importance to the history of the town than its relations with the district to the south of the river, with part of the old manor of Bedminster, which

formed one of the possessions of Robert of Gloucester. The part of the manor that concerns us included the marshy land between the two reaches of the Avon, together with the red cliff and its immediate neighbourhood. The eastern half of this district was given by Earl Robert to the Knights Templars, and was therefore called Temple fee; it extended over the whole of the present parish of Temple. The church of the parish that was thus formed was dedicated to the Holy Cross of the Temple, and was originally an oval building. On the suppression of the Order in the reign of Edward II. Temple fee was granted to the Hospitallers or Knights of St. John, who had their sanctuary there, and a market held every week at Stallage Cross, in the four ways formed by Temple and Tucker Streets. This district was soon built over, and was peopled by Bristol men; some of the wealthiest merchants resided there, and it became the home of the Weavers' craft. On the west of Temple fee lay another member of Bedminster manor, Redcliff, with the parish of St. Thomas's, which followed its fortunes. This district was sold by the earl to Robert FitzHarding. Probably even at that time there was a town of considerable size on or about the cliff, and it seems to have thriven wonderfully under the care of its new lords. The feudal splendours of Berkeley must not make us forget the burgher character of Harding and his more famous son. The early lords of Berkeley well knew how to increase their wealth by commerce. Under them Redcliff received the same privileges as its neighbour Bristol; until 1247 there was no quay in Bristol that served so well for trade as their broad quay on Redcliff Back; they claimed the river as part of their

lordship, and their own commerce and the profits they derived from the commerce of their tenants must have brought them great wealth. They were represented by their own reeves, and had their own courts, market, and fair. The wealth of these communities south of the Avon may be estimated by their contributions to the aid levied by John in 1210; Redcliff paid 1000 marks, the same amount as the contribution of Bristol, and Temple 500.

At the same time, by the end of the twelfth century, Bristol had after a sort spread itself over both Temple and Redcliff. Both alike were colonised by Bristol men, who had no desire to forfeit their positions as burgesses of their ancient borough or come under the jurisdiction of a mesne lord because they lived on the other side of the river. Nor did it seem as though they would have to do so; for John, in his charter of 1188, of which something will be said in the next chapter, with the assent of Maurice of Berkeley, granted the privileges it contained 'to his burgesses of Bristol dwelling within the walls and without, as far as the boundary of the town,' viz. to mention one point, as far as Brightbow, some 600 yards south of Redcliff Church. By this charter, then, Temple and Redcliff were reckoned in Bristol; the inhabitants enjoyed all the same privileges and immunities from external jurisdiction as their co-burgesses within the walls, and in 1240 they were commanded by Henry III. to aid in making the new channel for the Frome, as it was a work undertaken for the common profit of the town. The union between what may now be called Bristol to the north and to the south of the Avon was furthered by the building of a stone bridge across the river, which was carried out by all the bur-

gesses in common after the completion of the new harbour. This union was by no means pleasing to the lords of the southern district. An effort made by the Templars to obtain the exemption of their tenants from the taxes and courts of the town was defeated by royal writ, and their successors appear on the whole to have lived on good terms with the municipal authorities. It was far otherwise with the lords of Berkeley; they broke the weights of the Bristol burgesses in Redcliff, as an infringement of their rights; they held their own courts, kept their own prison, and were prepared to maintain their jurisdiction to the utmost. Not long probably after the bridge was finished the burgesses enclosed the district between the two reaches of the Avon, the larger part of Redcliff and Temple, with a wall. One can scarcely help looking at the building of the bridge as an epoch in Bristol history; it seems a symbol and an assertion of the determination of the burgesses to allow no external jurisdiction in what had now become the southern quarter of their town. It was followed by a fierce struggle with the lords of Berkeley, which at one critical period seemed certain to end in the defeat of the town. When, after more than a hundred years from the completion of the bridge, the final victory of the town came, it came in more triumphant guise than the burgesses of the thirteenth century could have hoped for.

CHAPTER III.

THE GREAT INSURRECTION.

Early trade—Bristol ships used in war—Early charters—Guilds—Crafts and their guilds—The commune—The merchant guild—The mayor—The rent of the town—Growth of privileges—Strife with the lords of Berkeley—The Great Insurrection—The fall of Edward II.

Now that a short sketch has been given of the part taken by Bristol in the affairs of the nation down to the end of the thirteenth century, it seems time to turn to some notices of its early government and trade. When Bristol first appears, it is as part of the royal demesne, and in conjunction, as we have seen, with the estate of Barton; its presiding magistrate was the *gerefa*, the reeve of the lord, who was in this case the king. The town (apart from Redcliff) is described in the reign of Edward I. as consisting of four wards, which have already been noticed as marking an early division. If this was so, each of these parishes would probably have some separate arrangements for local administration, similar to those existing in rural townships. By the date of the Domesday Survey, and no doubt long before that time, this little group of parishes had a single life, and a unity of organisation, resting principally on the basis of the common lordship under which they had grown

up. It will moreover be observed that the inhabitants of these parishes had by this time attained a unity of a special kind; they were described as burgesses. Originally only a part of the hundred of Barton, the town had, for fiscal purposes, wholly taken the place of the old rural district, and the burgesses make the return. These burgesses are the householders, holding their tenements, shops, houses, and gardens of the lord, and paying their rents to his representative, the borough-reeve. By 1086 a settled yearly amount was paid by the reeve to the lord, as the farm or rent of the borough, and after paying this sum the reeve was entitled to any further profits. His administration, however, was not a despotism; it was controlled by the right of the townsmen to take part in all that concerned themselves. They had their own courts, presided over by the reeve, but constituted by their attendance as tenants of the lord, whom the reeve represented both in fiscal and judicial matters. While they were not exempt from the jurisdiction of the sheriff of Gloucestershire, they had their own hustings or hundred court, where they were the judges, held, at least after the Conquest, once a week for the hearing of all suits, and a burh-gemot, or court-leet, held twice or at first three times in a year, for the view of frankpledge, or generally for police purposes, where the reeve was the judge, and in this court he would admit fresh tenants. The constitution of the town then was manorial rather than municipal; it was based on the principle of the hundred rather than on that of the municipality. Nor was this system changed by the Conquest, though the Normans probably gave some distinctness to the idea of tenure as the

qualification of the burgesses, the free tenants of the lord.

Municipal organisation in Bristol was the consequence of commercial activity. Her early trade with Ireland in the time of the Ostmen, and the colonisation of Dublin by Bristol tradesmen, have already been noticed. In the twelfth century the trade with Ireland included many exports besides slaves. Bristol had become a mart for cloth, for much rough frieze was manufactured in the neighbouring district, and a great fair held on St. James's day, at the back of the priory, for the sale of cloth, leather, corn, and other articles of merchandise, was attended by merchants both from different parts of England and from foreign countries. The Avon afforded the means of collection and distribution, and a casual notice of the time of Edward I. shows that the river was largely used for internal navigation. The Scandinavian trade, which rose probably through the connexion of the town with Ireland, and was destined to become a prominent feature in Bristol history, was already important, and ships from Norway and other foreign lands are spoken of as crowding the port. One of the chief Bristol industries was soap-making; and in a curious story told by Richard of Devizes, a French Jew, who, according to the often-repeated fable, was sending a boy to be crucified by the Jews of Winchester, anxious to prevent his staying at any other town, warns him that at Bristol every one was a soap-maker, an occupation the French regarded with peculiar disgust. Bristol soap is said to have been largely used in London. In early days tanneries stood upon the banks of the Avon as they do now. Here too was the great mart

for the fish of the Channel, and this was no small matter when fish was largely eaten for religious reasons. The town was one of the principal exchanges in the kingdom, and had both a mint and a royal treasury. A new commercial era began with the accession of Henry II.; for his marriage with Eleanor of Aquitaine made England the chief consumer of the wines of Southern France. Bristol at once became the great depôt of this trade. No stranger was allowed to compete with its burgesses by selling wine in the borough, except on board his ship. The king kept cellars in the town, and when they were empty bought of the merchants. The importance of this trade has continued through the whole course of the city's history. In the middle of the fourteenth century the Gascon merchants declared that the harsh dealings they met with at both London and Bristol would put a stop to the importation of wine into England. It became the custom of the city to make presents of wine to those who had deserved well of her, to her representatives in Parliament and others. This custom was brought to an end by the Municipal Reform Act, and the wine of the Corporation was sold in 1836.

Bristol, as we have seen, was a famous place for shipping, and her ships were employed on more than one occasion of general importance. Although as yet no attempt had been made at naval organisation, Bristol ships formed part of a fleet that achieved a notable success in the twelfth century, and then her burgesses seem to have been as troublesome to their companions at sea as they were in early days to their neighbours on land. Of any share that the town may have had in the

crusades of kings and princes nothing is known. Independent expeditions against the unbelievers, however, were continually made. One of these, a purely naval crusade, was undertaken in 1147 by men of the burgher class from Flanders, Germany, and, above all, from England; and the ships of Bristol, Hastings, and Southampton formed the principal part of one of the English divisions of the fleet. The Crusaders attacked Lisbon, which was then held by the Moors, and Alfonso of Portugal proposed that they should remain and reduce the city. Most of the fleet agreed to do so. William Calf and his brother Ralph, men of great influence in the Bristol and Southampton contingent, opposed this course: their minds were set on booty, and they wanted to sail on, and take any ships they met with along the coasts. Their opposition nearly ruined the undertaking, and was only overcome by a moving appeal from Hervey Glanvill, the leader of the fleet. Now, as Calf was the name of a family of Bristol merchants in the fourteenth century, it is probable enough that these men, who are said to have had a pirate spirit, and who evidently were seamen of repute, belonged to our town. Lisbon was invested, and at the moment of its fall fresh trouble was caused by a mutiny that was stirred up by a Bristol priest, for each ship carried its own chaplain. However, the city was taken, and the success of these burgher-seamen is contrasted by their contemporaries with the failure of the crusade of the Emperor Conrad and Lewis VII. For us it has a special interest from its connexion with the long alliance between England and Portugal. The first step towards the institution of an organised naval system was taken at the close of the thirteenth

century. The year 1294 was a critical period in the reign of Edward I. Wales was in rebellion, war had broken out with Scotland, French ships were ravaging our coasts, and Philip IV. seemed about to accomplish his great aim, the reduction of Edward's Gascon dominions. Accordingly the king formed a navy of three squadrons named after Yarmouth, Portsmouth, and the West. A rate was levied on maritime districts for the defence of the coast, and the compulsory purchase of ships and the impressment of men were enforced. Bristol was one of the ports that contributed to the Western squadron, which had the special charge of guarding the Irish Channel. From this time notices of the employment of her ships in the king's service are of frequent occurrence.

The growth of the commerce of Bristol, and the relations between the town and Henry of Anjou before he became king, afford special reasons for the charter it received from him in the first year of his reign. By this charter Bristol men and their merchandise were made free of toll throughout the kingdom. This privilege, which was also granted at different times to other boroughs, was a great gain at a period when payments were demanded whenever a bale of goods was taken across a bridge or brought into another town. A charter granted by John while Count of Mortain, probably in 1188, is of wider interest. It was granted, as we have seen, to his burgesses within and without the walls, in Redcliff and Temple fee, as well as in Bristol proper. It protected the trade in wine, cloth, wool, leather, and corn from the competition of strangers; it freed the townsmen from the obligation of having their

corn ground in the lord's mill, and it provides that no burgess should be impleaded without the walls—all Bristol cases were to be tried in Bristol itself, and not by any external authority. All tenures were to be by burgage, the counterpart of socage tenure in the country. This meant that there was to be no more tenure by villenage; no man who held land or a house was to be required to render any other service for it except the payment of a small sum fixed once for all for each tenement, which was called land-gable, and which varied in amount according to the size and position of the holding. In the ward of Trinity this rent varied from $15\frac{1}{2}d.$ to $3\frac{3}{4}d.$, the ordinary sum; in the ward of St. Mary-le-port the average was higher. Burgage tenure, moreover, brought with it the right of devising tenements so held, though wills of real estate were not allowed generally. No burgess was to be called on to accept the wager of battle unless accused of the death of a stranger slain within the town. Instead of that foreign custom, a townsman would henceforward maintain his right or clear himself by the old English methods of compurgation and ordeal. One clause of this charter demands longer comment; it runs—'they may have all their reasonable guilds as well or better than they had them in the time of Robert and his son William, Earls of Gloucester.'

These associations were a prominent feature in English town life. They all had more or less of a religious character; each had its patron saint and provided for the performance of certain services. In all ancient guilds a common feast and much drinking together were important features, while, at the same time,

there were strict rules to ensure the observance of good manners. These guilds acted somewhat like benefit clubs and mutual insurance societies; they were the means of teaching the people of our towns the lessons of thrift and self-government, and the secret of living pleasant. Guilds existed for various special objects. In some the religious element was uppermost; others, while retaining their religious character, were closely connected with different crafts, and others again fulfilled various functions along with religious and social duties. While there does not appear to be any reason for believing that the guild system had any connexion with the government of Bristol before the end of the twelfth century, there can be no doubt that these institutions existed here before the Conquest. The reference in John's charter to the days of Earl Robert and his son seems to show that Robert of Gloucester pursued the same policy as his father Henry I. in confirming national usages. Amongst the most ancient of the English guilds was the Guild of the Kalendars of Bristol. Besides performing the ordinary guild functions of mutual help, of visiting the sick and providing masses for the dead, it undertook works of education and learning. A guild of Kalendars existed in Exeter, and probably in other English towns, certainly in many on the Continent. The guild-meetings are said to have been held on the Kalends of each month. The earliest home of the Bristol guild was in Trinity Church, and it was moved thence to All Saints by Robert FitzHarding, who gave it the charge of his school for Jewish converts. When Henry III. was in Bristol in 1216, he and the legate Gualo granted the guild a charter of confirmation

'in consideration of the ancient and kindly duties it fulfilled.' This fraternity, which, like most other guilds, consisted of women as well as men, possessed considerable property. In the fifteenth century it maintained a free library, and perhaps kept the records of the town. It is not unlikely that its priests acted, when required, as public clerks, or scribes.

Many guilds were connected in a peculiar manner with the different handicrafts carried on in the town. These are generally called Craft-guilds. The phrase is misleading, for the terms craft and guild express two distinct ideas: a craft or mistery was a particular trade carried on by men who had knowledge of it; a guild was a means of association based on certain acts of religion and mutual help, performed at the common cost, the money necessary for these and for all other acts of the society being raised by a rate or *gyld* levied on each of the members. Great as the differences are in all respects between town life in England in the middle ages and in modern times, the chief difference lies in the change that has taken place in the conditions of trade. Organisation and union have given way to competition. In early times the men of the same craft took common action to protect their common interests, to prevent the burgher aristocracy from oppressing them, to shut out external competition, to ensure good work, and for other like purposes. In order to enforce their rules and to gain the power of holding common property, it was necessary that these crafts should have a corporate existence, that each of them should form some bond of association. This was found in the guild system. Accordingly the trades or

crafts in each town either founded each for itself a special guild, or joined one already in existence; in some cases, though this was rare, a craft had more than one guild. Guilds of this sort were not allowed without special license, for although mere voluntary fraternities could be formed without external sanction, yet when craftsmen sought to regulate trade and hold property by giving their craft the corporate existence attained by the guild, it became necessary for them to obtain the leave of the lord or other authorities of the town. This was obtained by payment, and when a craft received license to have its guild, as the Bristol crafts had in the days of Earls Robert and William, it was able to enforce its rules and claim protection for its property. Chief among the rules of each craft was that no one might exercise the trade it regulated unless he belonged to its guild, and so came under its government. Besides forming the incorporating bond which enabled their members to regulate trade and to hold property in common, the guilds of the craftsmen discharged religious and social functions. All the crafts that were thus inguilded had their patron saints: all performed certain religious acts expressive of their common life, such as supplying a taper to burn before the image of their patron; many had their own chapels, which were often built on to parish churches, and their own halls, where they held their common feasts and carried on the management of their trade. Intimately as the craft and its guild were connected, it will be seen that they were not the same. When in the time of Edward VI. all guilds were suppressed, the crafts continued to exist as incorporated societies: the bond which originally

gave them their corporate existence was broken, but they did not lose that existence, because it had been sanctioned by authority, and, in many cases, had been made a matter of record in charters. In Bristol at least twenty-six crafts were thus inguilded, and there were, besides these, other classes of workmen, such as the Wine-hauliers and Quay-porters, which seem to have had some kind of organisation, though they do not appear to have obtained guilds.

The corporate life of the crafts was strengthened by the custom, which prevailed here as in other towns, of different trades having each its own district. The Weavers here, as in London, Winchester, and other places, the most powerful craft, had their home in Temple fee. The patron of their guild was St. Katharine, and their guild chapel, dedicated to her in 1299, still stands against Temple Church; their guild hall was destroyed not long ago. The Tuckers or Fullers gave their name to Tucker Street in the same district. Corn Street must, one would imagine, have been the quarters of the Cornesers, or corn-dealers. Christmas Street, though known by that name as early as the fourteenth century, was also called Knifesmith Street, after the Cutlers; and the Butchers had their shambles in 'Bocherew' in the market, at the back of St. Mary-le-port. So, too, though the Cooks do not seem to have had a guild, their shops once gave the name of Cooks Row to a street by the church of St. Nicholas; and here, and in another row hard by, behind All Saints, the poorer people of the town had their food dressed. The Bakers had their hall adjoining the Dominican priory; the patron of their guild was St. Clement, and the guild

held its services in its patron's chapel in the church of the friars. There the guild brethren offered lights at the altar, and the cost of them was defrayed by 'Saint Clement's money,' a special contribution collected by two officers called Waxmen, who are found in other guilds also. The Tailors do not seem to have had a guild until the reign of Richard II. Then two burgesses founded and endowed a fraternity to meet in a chapel in St. Ewen's, to the honour of God and St. John the Baptist, and this guild, being licensed by the king as a corporation with power of self-government and of purchasing land to a certain amount, became 'The Fraternity of Tailors of Bristol of the Guild of St. John the Baptist.' The Tailors' craft was a rich one, for, as we shall see, the clothing trade of the town was of no small importance. An ancient Norman hall, of which some remains are still to be seen in Small Street, was perhaps the hall of one of the crafts. Besides these halls, the burgesses had a common place of meeting in the Guildhall in Broad Street. This implies that the government of the town was just as closely connected with the guild system as the various trades were that obtained license 'to have their guilds,' and this connexion appears to have arisen from the peculiar position assumed by one, and that the most powerful, association in the town, the merchant guild. This guild, which has its counterparts in London, Winchester, York, and elsewhere, is mentioned incidentally as existing in Bristol in 1242.

We have seen that the early government of Bristol was founded on the administrative system of the hundred; that the 'lawful men' were the free tenants of the lord, and that the borough moot had its root in, and was

virtually the same as, the court-leet of a manor. In the twelfth century, however, our English towns adopted the idea of the *communa*, which meant government by a guild or commune, for Glanvill defines the one term by the other. This form of government implied, speaking generally, that the *ferm* or rent of the town was a fixed sum and was farmed by the townsmen; that they chose their own officers, who had charge of the judicial and financial administration of the town, and that every one who resided a year and a day within the bounds of the borough became a burgess. The acquisition of these privileges seems to imply the existence of some body of burgesses to receive and exercise them. And such a body was naturally found in the highest guild, the merchant guild, which consisted of the representatives of the '*burgenses*' of the Domesday Survey. On the establishment of the commune this body exercised the privileges granted to the town, and became the communal or governing guild.

The commune was a French conception, and accordingly the chief magistrate of a town that was inguilded bore the French title of Mayor. Now, in a copy of a Bristol deed of which the original is lost, Robert Fitz-Nichol signs as Mayor of Bristol as early as 1200.[1] This signature, however, does not appear to represent any change of office; that came later. But at the same time, if it is genuine, it tells us that the communal idea

[1] J. F. Nicholls, Bristol and Glouc. Archæol. Proc. 1879. It may as well be noted here as anywhere else that 'fitz' does not imply foreign descent, it is simply an equivalent of *filius*. It is possible that Robert, the mayor, was called Nicholsson by his neighbours; it would be pedantic for us to call him so, and I prefer to follow the ordinary usage.

was strong in Bristol, and it is quite possible that in this and some other cases the townsmen may have chosen their own reeve: for while in theory the office of reeve was one of nomination, it may well be that in fact the burgesses of a powerful borough elected their reeve at the borough moot, such election, of course, being subject to the approval of the lord. It has been asserted that when Henry III. held the council at Bristol after his coronation of which a notice has already been given, he granted a charter, that has since been lost, empowering the town to choose a mayor and two provosts or reeves. This is most unlikely, for if such a grant had been made it would certainly have been quoted in succeeding charters of confirmation. From 1217 onwards, however, we have uninterrupted lists of mayors, headed by the name of Adam Page, who held office in that year, and of, first, two provosts, then from 1267 two stewards, and from 1311 two bailiffs. The changes in the title of these officers does not seem to imply any change in the character of their office; they were the mayor's assistants, and were chiefly concerned with the collection of the ferm and other financial business. It seems probable, then, that during Henry's visit there was some recognition of a change that had gradually been growing up. No single date can be assigned to the advance from a reeve appointed by the lord to a mayor chosen by the governing body of the town, to the establishment of a commune in Bristol. The change was not violent, though it was not the less important for its silent introduction.

Besides the title of mayor, another sign of the triumph of the communal idea in Bristol is to be found

in the fact that in 1225 the ferm of the town was let to the burgesses at 245*l.* a year. Although after this date Bristol was sometimes leased to individuals, it was usually rented by the burgesses, who from the reign of Edward III. held it almost uninterruptedly by virtue of several demises. From the marriage of Eleanor of Castile to Edward I., Bristol, like Exeter in earlier days, was generally assigned to the queen as part of her marriage portion; she received the rent of the town, and in almost every case leased it to the mayor and commonalty. From this custom Bristol was called the Queen's Chamber, so when the town presented plate to Anne Boleyn, the present was said to be made by her 'chamber,' and this title was insisted on in a petition sent to Henrietta Maria. The ferm of the town, which was in lieu of rents, fines, and other profits of jurisdiction, and of the revenue derived from fairs and markets, amounted in the reign of Henry VI. to 160*l.*; it was reduced by Richard III. and was finally redeemed in the reign of Charles I.

The body, then, which exercised the right of choosing the mayor and his assistants, and which we can scarcely doubt farmed the rent of the town when it was let to the townsmen, was the merchant guild. In some towns, as at Winchester, the municipal privileges were conferred on the merchant guild by the terms of a charter, and in these cases there is direct evidence of the governing character of this guild. This is not the case at Bristol, where the body receiving privileges of a like nature is described as the burgesses. Nevertheless the position held by the merchant guild of Bristol rests on equally strong ground; for in an inquisition of the

liberties of the town held 46 Edward III., and recorded in the 'Great Red Book' in the Council-house, it is declared that Bristol is an ancient borough (that is, part of the ancient demesne of the Crown), with mayor, bailiffs and a communa from time immemorial; that the burgesses have a free merchant guild in the town and its suburbs and all things pertaining to a merchant guild, and that, in virtue of this guild, the mayor and bailiffs, their predecessors and successors, are used to take a certain fee from all admitted to the said guild for their own use. Here we have a distinct declaration of the oneness of the merchant guild with the governing body of the town; the mayor and bailiffs, sitting at the court-leet for the admission of a new burgess, are the officers of the guild admitting a new member into their fraternity. While, then, the root of municipal life at Bristol is to be looked for in the court-leet and the holders of burgage tenements, its aspect was modified by the gradual introduction of the communal system. The change was not simply in idea. Exclusiveness is a necessary characteristic of a guild, and there was no machinery to enforce the admission of those who were entitled to be members of the merchant guild, a defect in the system which seems here, as well as elsewhere, to have led to serious trouble.

The hall of the governing, or communal, guild was the Guildhall of the town, and, like all other guilds, it must have had its patron saint. As in the case of London and of some other ancient cities, it is impossible to say what the dedication of the Bristol merchant guild was. There seems, however, some reason to believe that it was dedicated to St. George, or perhaps to St.

Clement and St. George, for adjoining the Guildhall and forming part of the building was a chapel dedicated to St. George. Moreover when, as we shall see later, the government of the trade of Bristol was, in the fifteenth century, under the control of a fellowship of merchants, the Merchant Venturers of later days and of our own time, this fellowship had a guild dedicated to St. Clement and St. George, which met, according to William Wyrcestre's Itinerary, in Richard Spicer's chapel of St. George. This has universally been interpreted as the chapel adjoining the Guildhall. But the records of the Merchant Venturers clearly state that the meeting-place of the fellowship was in Spicer's chapel and hall on the Back, where the hall of that great merchant's house, now called Back Hall, is still to be seen. The guild of the fellowship paid special honour to St. Clement, and when in later times the merchants built a hall for themselves, their chapel was dedicated to that saint. St. George, then, or St. Clement and St. George, may fairly be assumed to have been the patron or patrons of the Bristol merchant guild.

A close connexion existed between the municipal body and the guild of the Kalendars, 'gilda seu fraria communitatis cleri et populi Bristolliæ.' We have already seen that the visit of Henry III. in 1216, which certainly had some influence on the establishment of the rights of the communal guild, was the occasion of a charter to the Kalendars. Moreover the mayor had the right of presenting the prior of the guild, and in his oath on taking office pledged himself to uphold the prior and his brethren, the priests of the guild, who formed a college, dwelling together in the

guild-house, built in 1333 on the north side of All Saints, and having charge of the library, kept in the next century in a room over part of the church. While the guild of the Kalendars was totally distinct from the merchant guild, it seems probable that the members of the highest secular association in Bristol belonged also to this brotherhood, the most ancient and honourable religious guild in their town.

During the hundred and fifty years that followed the mayoralty of Adam Page the privileges of the town were greatly increased. In 1256 the burgesses were allowed to choose a coroner to hear pleas of the Crown; they were to have their liberties as the citizens of London held theirs; and in 1300 they received a charter to themselves and their successors, which thus recognised their corporate succession. The grant of the liberties enjoyed by one town to the burgesses of another was common, and affords an interesting illustration of the estimation in which the liberties of various towns were held. No higher model could be set than London, and there is evidence that Bristol men noted and followed, as far as they were able, the customs of the greater city. Some of the principal Bristol families seem to have been closely connected with London. There was a Henry le Walleys provost of Bristol in 1233, and a man of the same names mayor of London six times between 1273 and 1298, and mayor of Bordeaux in 1275. Considering the close connexion between Bristol and Bordeaux, it is likely enough that this mayor of London was either our Bristol provost himself or his son. Frauncis, too, the name of a great Bristol family, occurs several times in the municipal

records of London, and John Adryan, mayor of Bristol in 1249, may well have been the father of the John Addrien who was mayor of London in 1270. Such frequent coincidences of names can scarcely have been accidental, and I am inclined to think that a connecting link between the merchants of the two chief wine ports of England is to be found in Bordeaux. Bristol was in its turn taken as a model. Its connexion with Ireland made its liberties the standard not only of those granted to Dublin, but to four other Irish towns; while the charters of Lancaster, Chester, Hereford, Shrewsbury, and ten other English boroughs all quote them in the same way. The privileges of Bristol, however, were not always beneficial to its neighbours; nor, though historically they are the forerunners of freedom, is it in the nature of privileges that they should be so. As early as 1209 the burgesses of Marlborough paid for the king's protection against the Bristol men, who seem to have used their charter of 1188 as a means of harassing them; and in 1346 the prior and convent of Henton made such grievous complaint of the injuries they did them at the Fair of Norton, by seizing their fish, victuals, leather, and other things necessary for their use, and keeping them until the brethren redeemed them, that Edward III. threatened that, if the burgesses presumed further on their freedom, he would take their liberties into his own hand.

Although ever since the charter granted by John and attested by Maurice of Berkeley, in 1188, Redcliff had been held to be part of the borough of Bristol, and the burgesses dwelling there to be burgesses of Bristol, and therefore exempt from extraneous jurisdiction, the

lords of Berkeley still exercised jurisdiction in the vill, and required their tenants to attend and plead in their court. Before the new bridge was built, this does not appear to have been held a matter of great moment; for in 1227 the burgesses of Bristol paid money to the Crown that Redcliff might be assessed as part of Somerset, and not with the borough: for this, however, there may have been some temporary cause. The new bridge must have knit the inhabitants on the two sides of the river more closely together. From 1247 the Redcliff men paid scot and lot with their fellow-burgesses, and the Berkeley claims were felt to be an indignity. The state of affairs was anomalous; a royal borough possessed of extensive privileges could not allow one part of itself to be under the jurisdiction of a feudal lord. A struggle between the borough and the lord was inevitable. It broke out after Lord Thomas had made over Bedminster to his son Maurice, for the young man was eager in asserting his rights. While he and his father were with the king in Scotland, in 1303, his officers apprehended a burgess named Richard Cornwall, on suspicion of murder, and put him in their lord's prison. Now some forty years before a man who had been declared guilty of theft in the lord of Berkeley's court had been promptly hanged, and that without trial by jury. So Cornwall's fellow-townsmen knew that his life was in danger, and, besides, the liberties of their town were at stake. Accordingly the mayor, Thomas Grove, did as the chief magistrate of every free city or borough would then have done in such a case; he rang the common bell. When the Bristol men heard the first clang from Trinity Belfry, we may be sure that they left their shops and ware-

houses, and came in hot haste to the Guildhall. Then, led by the mayor, they crossed the bridge, broke the lord's gaol, delivered their fellow-townsman, and, according to Sir Maurice, seized on a booty worth 500 marks.

Sir Maurice complained to the king that the burgesses would not allow him to hold his court or his market, and two judges were appointed to investigate the case with a jury of the freeholders of Somerset. On the other hand, petitions were sent up from Bristol, showing that Lord Thomas and his son had ridden into the town with horse and foot to compel the burgesses, evidently those who lived in Redcliff, to do suit at their court, had dragged them from their houses, and thrown them into a pit. When the Bristol women saw this, they, it is said, came to the help of the men, and the lords rode them down, so that many were hurt and killed. It is probable that, as was often the case in such documents, the matter is overstated. Certainly the throwing into the pit, an injury not likely to have been inflicted on a large number, applied especially to a certain Adam the cheeseman, who, it may be supposed, had refused a summons to the lord's court, and the wives and maidens of Bristol were perhaps no other than the women of his household. Some time afterwards certain Berkeley men quarrelled with one of the bailiffs of the town about this riot, and wounded him so that he died. At Tetbury fair, too, Lord Thomas and his son came riding down with their men, and beat and even imprisoned the burgesses who were at the fair. Again at Dundry fair the like happened, and there Adam the cheeseman had his legs broken, and William Randolf,

the mayor, and others were ill-treated. Moreover, Lord Thomas had levied distress on certain ships in St. Katharine's pill (or creek), as though he had the lordship of the Avon. A second commission was issued to try these complaints, and a heavy fine was laid on the Berkeley lords, which was commuted for service in the Scottish wars. The dispute about jurisdiction, however, remained unsettled, and added additional gravity to the most serious crisis in the history of the town.

This crisis, generally known as the Great Insurrection, was brought about by various causes. The merchant guild, which was invested with the government of the town, had a natural tendency to become an exclusive body. This was not confined to Bristol, for while diversity may be said to have been a law of the growth of our boroughs, the tendency towards oligarchical government was universal. There was no means of compelling the ruling body to admit new members into its fellowship, and it gradually dwindled down to a narrow oligarchy. Besides, every strain on the administrative system of a town caused the management of affairs to fall more and more into the hands of a select number, some body of councillors who assisted the mayor and bailiffs. Such a body naturally tried to usurp the right of electing the magistrates and to become permanent and self-elective. In Bristol, besides the difficulties arising from rapid growth, the dispute with the Berkeley lords must have encouraged the rise of such a body as this, and in 1312 fourteen of the greater men of the town had all the government in their own hands. They were headed by

William Randolf, who had already been mayor three times. On the other hand, they were opposed by the commonalty, the townsmen at large, who declared that all the burgesses were on the same footing, and ought to have an equal share in the privileges of the town. The commonalty was led by John Taverner, who had then been mayor twice, and by other men of consideration; for, strong as the oligarchy was, it was not strong enough always to carry its own men for the municipal offices, and the elections here, as in London, were often gained by the popular party. The Fourteen tried to strengthen themselves by an alliance with the Court, and by maintaining the authority of the constable of the castle, while the commonalty was secretly favoured by the lords who were in opposition to Edward II. The crisis that followed afforded an opportunity to the Berkeley lords for distressing the town, of which they largely availed themselves.

The Bristol insurrection was closely connected with the political troubles of the kingdom. In 1312 the king, in defiance of the ordinances by which the barons sought to restrain the power he misused, recalled Gaveston from banishment, and in the following June the favourite was put to death. War appeared imminent, and the king sent to the constables of his castles, Bristol being among them, warning them to keep them safely. Moreover, he sent to the mayor of Bristol and to other mayors, bidding them guard their towns, for conspiracies were afoot, and worse was likely to happen. Lord Badlesmere was made constable of Bristol Castle, and the *ferm* of the town was let to him; he had the collection of the rents and customs, and the mayor and

bailiffs were charged to assist him. The dispute between the two parties in the town came to a head about certain customs, and especially about the toll on fish. This toll was levied on every cargo of fish brought into the port and was paid to the constable; it was an old subject of dispute, and the amount had been fixed by a writ of Edward I. The commonalty refused to pay this toll, and would not allow Badlesmere to enter the town to collect it or any other tax. On the other hand, the Fourteen, faithful to their alliance with the royal authority (one of their number had been constable in 1304), tried to enforce the toll, allied themselves with Badlesmere, and upheld his claims. While the exact order of the events that followed is somewhat uncertain, they rest on the most trustworthy evidence.

The king appointed a commission to try the case, and at its head was Lord Thomas of Berkeley. This boded ill for the town. The judges met in the Guildhall, and a jury was formed which, contrary to the privileges of Bristol, included men who were not burgesses, and were probably Gloucestershire men more or less under the Berkeley influence. When the leaders of the commonalty saw this, they went out, rang the common bell, and addressed the people. 'The judges,' they said, 'are allied with our enemies; they have brought strangers in to our prejudice, and so the rights of the town will be lost for ever.' On this the townsmen rose and attacked the Guildhall. The court, which was held in a large chamber (solarium) above the ground floor or undercroft, broke up in confusion. In the panic several tried to escape by the windows, fell into the street and broke their limbs. A fierce fight took place, and twenty

men were killed; the judges got away in safety. For this riot eighty burgesses were indicted at the Gloucestershire assizes, and failing to appear were outlawed. The king seized the liberties of the town, appointed Badlesmere warden, and on May 2, 1313 deprived the mayor and bailiffs of the return of writs. Meanwhile, the Fourteen were chased from the town, and though the king ordered that they should be restored, the order was disregarded, their merchandise of wine, salt, and the like was seized, and some royal officers were imprisoned. The commonalty chose Taverner as mayor with two bailiffs and a coroner, without presenting them to take oath before the constable, as they were bound to do. Further, they built a wall across Wine Street and Peter Street, on the line of the present Dolphin Street, long called Defence Lane, so as to shut out the castle, and from this wall some shots were sent against the castle garrison.

Early, probably, in 1314, the Earl of Gloucester marched against Bristol with 20,000 men, the forces of three shires, and demanded its surrender. Taverner refused to open the gates: the earl had been warned not to proceed to extremities, for all the troops that could be raised were needed for the Scottish war, and so he withdrew. There can be no doubt that the barons used the insurrection as one among many means for embarrassing the king. The crushing defeat of Bannockburn on June 24, followed by a year of famine and pestilence, prevented any decisive step against the town, and Bristol remained defiant, an independent state within the kingdom. Although in the spring of 1316 the government was in the hands of Thomas, Earl of

Lancaster, the chief of the baronial party, it was felt necessary to bring the town to order. A fresh inquisition into the whole matter was held at Westminster on March 30. Nicholas Rowberrow, John Hunt, and four others of the popular party attended to answer for the commonalty, and the case was decided against the town by a jury of twenty-four Gloucestershire knights. Then Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, the king's cousin, went down to Bristol and held a parley with the chiefs of the commonalty. He told them that they had been found guilty, and promised them that, if they would submit and give up certain of the ringleaders (the chronicler says 'homicidas,' but the word should scarcely be pressed), they should find the king merciful. These terms by no means pleased the Bristol men. 'We did not begin the strife,' they answered, 'and have done no wrong to the king. Certain men tried to deprive us of our rights, and we defended them, as reason was we should. If, therefore, the king will take off the burdens he has laid upon us, and will grant us life and limb, chattels and tenements, then he shall be our lord and we will do his will; if not, we will go on as we have begun and will defend our liberties and privileges even to the death.' These haughty words remind one of the speech made by the Mayor of London to Henry III. in 1260. 'Sire,' said the mayor, 'so long as you will be good king and lord to us, we will be faithful and true to you.' The quarrel between the two parties in London, and its connexion with the dispute then existing between the king and the barons, present a curious parallel to the Bristol insurrection. No wonder that the words of the men of Bristol were held to be a dangerous

precedent; for, had they been largely adopted, and the disorder of the times rendered this possible, England would have been split up into a number of virtually independent states.

The town was now besieged by a regular army led by John Charlton the chamberlain, Roger Mortimer of Chirk, Badlesmere, the contriver of the whole business as he is called, and other lords. Meanwhile Maurice of Berkeley employed his ships in cutting off the approach by water. At first the townsmen stood firm, for another Scottish expedition was talked of, and they hoped that the barons would draw off their forces. They were mistaken: large stones thrown from the castle by machines shook their walls and houses, and they were forced to open their gates. Several burgesses were imprisoned, and the town was delivered into the custody of Lord Maurice as warden. In December peace was purchased by a fine of 4,000 marks and the arrears of the customs. Taverner and his son and another were banished, and the liberties of the town were restored. This insurrection should be taken into account in estimating the disorganisation of the reign of Edward II., and the utter prostration of the royal authority during this portion of it. Locally one would expect to find the fall of the town followed by the re-establishment of the oligarchy of the Fourteen. This hardly seems to have been the case. Although Randolf re-entered the town as mayor, the names of the mayors and bailiffs during the next thirty years suggest a doubt as to the success of the party. One or two of the bailiffs had certainly belonged to it, but the mayoralty was generally held by men who do not seem to have had any connexion with it.

At the same time, in spite of the apparent break-up of the party of the Fourteen, the tendency to oligarchy was as strong as ever, and the municipal offices were held by the members of a few wealthy houses. Roger Turtle, bearer of a name still deservedly honoured in Bristol, though in a different connexion, was mayor ten times, and Richard Tilly held the office four years in succession. Neither Turtles nor Tillys appear amongst the Fourteen. Along with these two houses must be ranked the Spicers, and Thomas Spicer belonged to the popular party. Before long, as we shall see, the oligarchical principle was firmly established. The insurrection, however, was not without its effect on the future of the town. Bristol had shown its importance, and the next period in its history is marked by a measure that settled the strife with the Berkeley lords and set the constitution of the town on a new basis. For while the charter that granted the town the rank and organisation of a county was largely due to commercial and other causes, it should certainly be connected with the Great Insurrection.

As the insurrection had been favoured by the barons of the opposition, the town was naturally on their side; indeed Lancaster, the chief of the party, was everywhere looked on as the champion of popular liberty. Factions divided the barons, and when in 1321 Edward suddenly attacked his enemies, his victory was complete. After the fall of Lancaster the other lords were easily taken and were put to death. Two of them, Henry Wylington and Henry de Montfort, fled to Bristol, and were there hanged on April 5, 1322. Popular gratitude attributed to them, as to Lancaster, a

kind of saintship, and more than a year after their execution miracles were said to be wrought at the gibbets where their bodies still hung. The feeling of Bristol was common to the whole kingdom, and the general discontent was aggravated by the folly of Edward and the violence and avarice of the Despensers. The king made an extraordinary number of grants to these favourites of his, and among them gave the younger Despenser the custody of the castle and the profits of the town of Bristol. When the queen landed from France in 1326, Edward fled to Wales, and sent the elder Despenser to hold Bristol. The queen marched after him, came to Berkeley, which she delivered to Lord Thomas, for his father Maurice had died in prison at Wallingford, and his castle had been given to the younger Despenser, and then, having been joined by the lords of the marches and others, she laid siege to Bristol town and castle on October 26. The townsmen appear to have forced Despenser to surrender, and the next day, in accordance with their loudly expressed demand, he was drawn outside the town and there put to death as a traitor. On the same day the bishops and lords of the queen's party at Bristol, with the consent of the whole commonalty of the realm, chiefly expressed, we may suppose, by the shouts of their armed followers and of the commonalty of our town, elected the young Edward as guardian of the kingdom. It seems, however, that a party in the town, probably the oligarchical faction, wished well to the king; for when he was brought to the castle as a prisoner some of the burgesses and, it is said, the friars of the Dominican convent plotted to rescue him and convey him to the Continent. Hearing

this, his keepers removed him to Berkeley. As he rode through the farmyards of the castle, Gournay, one of his jailors, and the soldiers mocked him, and placed a crown of twisted hay upon his head. So with many insults they brought him to Berkeley Castle, and there he was slain on September 21, 1327. Next day his murderers sent to Bristol and Gloucester, and called many abbots, knights, and burgesses to come out and view the body of their victim, in order that they might see that it bore no marks of violence.

Note.—The first charter granted by Henry II. to Bristol must, as Mr. J. H. Round has pointed out to me, be referred to 1155, for it is attested by Roger, earl of Hereford, who died in that year. Seyer, who dates it 1164, on the ground that Thomas (Becket) attests as archbishop, misread *cancellario* for *Kantuarensi*.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BLACK DEATH.

War with France—Bristol ships—Wool trade; the Staple—The Black Death—A new class of journeymen—Disputes in crafts—Bristol a county—Government by an oligarchy of capitalists—The Common Council—The Court of Aldermen—Lollardy—The fall of Richard II.

ALTHOUGH Edward III. was personally extravagant and selfish, a vain and ambitious soldier, his reign was a period of extraordinary progress. The long war with France, while it taxed the energies of the nation to the utmost, drew out powers of which it had hitherto been unconscious; and, though the country was well-nigh ruined by the efforts demanded of it, these very efforts gave it strength and the means of recovery. In somewhat the same way the Black Death, the great calamity of the Middle Ages, while it swept away an already decaying social order, introduced new and more vigorous institutions. Bristol had a full share in the efforts of the nation, in the advance and in the reorganisation which marked this period. Edward, who claimed the throne of France in right of his mother, assumed the arms of that kingdom in 1340, and with this we may probably connect an order received in Bristol in 1349 that the common seal should be broken, because it did not present the royal arms aright. The new seal

of 1350 has the 'Ship and Castle'—a device not to be referred to any special event—which first appeared as the arms of the town in the thirteenth century, and the ship's standard displays the lilies of France quartered with the royal arms of England.[1]

The French war led to the revival of the naval arrangements made by Edward I. Bristol was again called on to furnish the king with ships and men, and the glorious victory of Sluys showed that Edward well knew how to use them. To the fleet of 1346, the year of the battle of Crecy and the siege of Calais, our town contributed twenty-four ships and 608 men, London twenty-five ships and 662 men, while Fowey sent forty-seven ships, many of them evidently small, as they bore only 770 men, and Yarmouth the extraordinary contingent of forty-three ships, carrying 1905 men. During the last years of the reign the English arms were unsuccessful. In 1372 the Earl of Pembroke, who was sent to Rochelle in order to relieve Gascony and Poitou, was defeated at sea and taken prisoner by the Spaniards. Rochelle was in danger of falling, and Edward accordingly sent summonses for men throughout the whole kingdom, and requisitioned ships in every port. About the end of August he put to sea with the largest fleet, so it is said, that any king of England had yet sailed with.

The ships sent from Bristol were nearly all of less than two hundred tons burden. Some of them carried a captain and a constable, an officer who probably discharged the duties of the modern boatswain, though of

[1] The shield on the title-page of this volume presents the arms of Bristol as they were figured in the sixteenth century.

far higher rank, as well as a master. The master and constable received sixpence a day, and each of the seamen threepence, besides a considerable extra 'reward.' Many of the ships, as was then the custom, were named after the churches of the town. Among them were the 'George,' a barque of 90 tons, called after the saint in whose honour Richard Spicer, who had been mayor the year before, built his chapel; the 'Trinity,' and the 'Gracedieu,' a ship of 200 tons, the property of Walter Derby, wine merchant of St. Werburgh's, a man of wealth and influence, for he was five times mayor, and after the death of Queen Philippa he and another burgess farmed the town of the king. The 'Gracedieu' was sailed by Walter Cogan as master: in some cases, however, the owner or part-owner sailed his own ship. The fleet accomplished nothing; the wind was contrary, and after beating about some time the king gave up the expedition. More than two hundred of the ships put in at Bordeaux for cargoes of wine, and among these, we may be sure, were the ships of the Bristol merchants. Although the merchants were thus not wholly losers by this expedition, a heavy calamity soon befell them. In June 1375 a year's truce was signed between England, France, and Castile, and, accordingly, a whole fleet of ships from Bristol, Yarmouth, and Southampton sailed for 'La Baye' (Bourgneuf Bay, in Brittany), for salt, in which the Bristol merchants dealt largely. The ships were laden and were about to set sail for England when, on August 10, they were suddenly attacked by Spanish galleys; some were captured, others were burnt. Among the Bristol ships that were thus lost were Richard Spicer's 'Gabriel,' of 215 tons, and Derby's

'Gracedieu.' The merchants, whose losses amounted to 17,739*l.*, petitioned the king in Parliament to gain them redress; but the period of victory was past, and no amends were made for this treacherous attack.

In order to meet the expenses incurred by the war and by his personal extravagance, Edward chiefly had recourse to the customs on merchandise, which had now taken the place of the old feudal taxes. The right to levy customs had been the principal subject of dispute between Edward I. and the Parliament, and the dispute was quietly carried on, especially as regards the imposts on the exportation of wool and cloth, during the greater part of the reign of Edward III. The king sometimes held assemblies of merchants, to which Bristol and other mercantile towns sent representatives, and treated with them about these imposts as his grandfather had done. The effects of this policy were that certain towns enjoyed a virtual monopoly of the trade; prices were raised, and the trade was protected and encouraged by special privileges.

A large part of the wealth of Bristol was derived from its trade in wool and the manufacture of woollen cloths. A striped woollen cloth, usually worn by the lower class, and made here and in Somerset, was called Bristol cotton, though it had no mixture of what we now call 'cotton,' which was not used in manufacture until the seventeenth century. During the thirteenth century large quantities of English wool were exported to Flanders to be made into cloth. Foreign war, however, made it advisable to increase the home market for wool, and in 1337 an effort was made to extend and improve our woollen manufacture. The export of wool

was forbidden, though probably only for a short time, people generally were not allowed to wear foreign cloth, and leave was given for the employment of foreign workmen. Shortly after this certain Bristol burgesses, Thomas Blanket and others, set up looms in their own houses, and employed weavers who were evidently foreigners. Indignant at this proceeding, for the stranger workmen, of course, did not belong to any guild, the mayor and bailiffs fined Blanket and the rest, and annoyed them in divers ways. Blanket appealed to the king, and a writ was sent down commanding that he and others should be allowed to employ such men as they pleased. Whether, as is usually said, the woollen stuff made by Blanket's workmen was the first appearance in England of the article that has made his name a household word or no, we may at least believe that the Bristol weaver and his goods derived their common name from the same source, *blanchette*, a white cloth. Thomas Blanket and his family grew in wealth and honour, and the fact that he held office as bailiff in 1341 and 1342 shows that his fellow-burgesses learnt to admire his enterprise. He evidently introduced improvements that enabled the Bristol weavers to make a better kind of cloth. Besides wool and woolfells, the export trade of the kingdom principally consisted of leather, lead, and tin, and in order to secure the customs on these 'staple' commodities, the merchants dealing in them were formed into a corporation, and certain towns were fixed on as markets and places of exportation, where the king's dues might be more easily levied. This plan, which was begun in 1313, was elaborated by Edward III., and, after some changes, a statute was passed in 1353,

fixing on eleven places in England, of which Bristol was one, on one in Wales, and three in Ireland, as staple towns. In each of these towns the merchants trading in staple goods were under the rule of their own officers, the mayor and constable of the staple; in Bristol the office of mayor of the staple was held by the mayor of the town. During the whole of this period Bristol trade grew and flourished. Heavy as the demands of the king were, both for money and ships, the encouragement he gave to trade generally, and especially to the trade in woollen goods, the chief manufacture of the town, and the energy of the merchants, balanced the sacrifices they were called upon to make. A vast increase in the wealth of the merchants, an entire revolution in the conditions of industry, the rise of a distinct class of journeymen, and a new importance given to capital in trade were among the results of the extraordinary calamity known as the Black Death.

The plague broke out in Bristol in the early part of the summer, probably in the June of 1349. It was brought to us from abroad, and so appeared first in our seaport towns, and seems to have come from Southampton to Bristol. Terrible as this visitation was generally, it fell with peculiar weight on certain towns and districts. Bristol suffered severely. The streets of the town were very narrow; for, as in the busier parts the ground was honeycombed with cellars for storing wine, salt, and other merchandise, no vehicle was allowed to be used in them. All goods were carried by porters or packhorses, a custom which continued at least to the end of the seventeenth century, and which excited the wonder of Samuel Pepys when he came hither. And the

streets were still further narrowed by the huge bulk-heads and projecting stalls of shops, and by the entrances into cellars. The less important streets were little better than deep dark lanes. In all alike the refuse of the dwellings on either side must have streamed down the drain that ran through the middle of them. The one redeeming feature in the sanitary condition of the town was that it had an abundant supply of water conveyed through conduits, for which it was largely indebted to its monasteries. The three lepers' hospitals mentioned in the 'Monasticon' are perhaps significant of the prevalence of a disease that was the invariable attendant of dirt. When the plague came there was little power of resistance. Few of those who were seized with it lived as long as three days, many died after one or even half a day's sickness. 'The whole strength of the town,' we are told, 'perished,' and grass is said to have grown inches high in the principal streets.

The immediate effect of this calamity was a large influx of population from the country; agricultural employments were deserted for the more profitable labour of the craftsman, the dependent condition of the villein for the privileges of the burgess. Up to this time there had been no barrier between the position of the master and that of the workman. Tradesmen paid little in wages and often employed only a single journeyman. When an apprentice's period of service was out, he generally worked for a short time for his master, and then set up a business for himself; for, as trade was then carried on, it did not require much capital to make a beginning. While he was in service he felt that his

future prosperity was involved in the prosperity of the craft to which he and his master alike belonged. Now, however, the immigration of men from the country to take up trades gave rise to a distinct wage-earning class with interests and objects apart from their employers. The sudden removal of about half the population—for it is supposed that this number perished in the country generally, and Bristol appears to have suffered at least as much as other towns—threw great wealth and great possibilities into the hands of the survivors. Masters and workmen alike tried to take advantage of the crisis. There is abundant evidence in the 'Great Red Book' of the corporation that the comparatively small number of master traders that survived in Bristol, finding that they had what may almost be called a monopoly, advanced their prices, and in many cases gave short measure and produced inferior articles; while, on their side, the workmen demanded higher wages, and took every means they could to enforce their claim. The craft rules were neglected; considerable disorganisation prevailed, and the ordinary means of checking such a state of things, by the operation of the guild system, proved insufficient to meet the emergency, for many who now exercised crafts appear not to have entered any guild.[1]

[1] The effects produced by the Black Death on trade and on the conditions of industry were not peculiar to Bristol. Similar changes may be observed in other towns of the same character. As, however, Bristol has been chosen to represent the class of English trading towns in this series, this volume seems the proper place to give prominence to the subject. Nothing is stated here that does not appear from documentary evidence to have taken place at Bristol itself. At the same time these statements are made with

The prosperity of the trade of the town and of the crafts which directed and carried it on was at stake. Accordingly, during the next fifty years the bond between the crafts and the municipal authority was drawn closer. The crafts received fresh trade ordinances from the mayor and common council (in speaking of this body it is necessary to anticipate what must shortly be said about it), they had their ancient ordinances re-confirmed, and in some cases also the ordinances that regulated their guilds. They thus obtained a new and distinct declaration of their rules, and a pledge that those rules would be enforced. Prices, weights and measures, and the conditions of labour were regulated, and, above all, the crafts gained the power of shutting out competition by the recognition of the rule that every workman should belong to the guild by which his craft was governed. The masters of the crafts were sworn before the mayor on their election, and parts were assigned to the crafts, in some cases possibly for the first time, in the festivities and ceremonies of the borough. While, however, these closer relations between the crafts and the authorities of the town were generally due to the disorganisation caused by the plague, they would certainly have been formed in one shape or other even without that determining cause. In this, indeed, as in much else, the Black Death hastened and decided a change to which there was a previous tendency. The 'Ordinances for the Weavers,' as given by William Colford, the recorder, in 1344 (Little Red Book), some of them ancient

the consciousness that the subject is full of difficulty, and that, as in most other matters of history that are best worth study, much must remain a matter of opinion.

and others newly made, lay down that no machine was to be kept in an upper room, or in a cottage, but in a shop in the street in the sight of all; no one was to be admitted into the craft unless he was a burgess; and each year the mayor was to summon all the Weavers before him, and they were then to elect four aldermen, who should be sworn to supervise all their craft, and to present all breaches of the ordinances before the mayor. Two or three other crafts received ordinances of less importance about the same time. The Weavers' ordinances seem to point to some disorders in the craft, which we may safely connect with the importation of alien workmen by Blanket. The guild system was not strong enough to remedy them; the authorities of the town interfered, and closer relations were established between the craft and the municipal government. This was just what was made common to all the crafts by the Black Death. As trade increased and men saw the advantage of employing a large amount of capital, and had the money to do so, and as, on the other side, fresh workmen, whether aliens or such as had escaped from villenage, settled in a town, the craft rules were sure to be evaded. The Weavers formed the wealthiest craft in Bristol; their trade was the largest, and they had much money at their command; no other craft offered the same inducements to immigration, and theirs was therefore the first to feel a change in the conditions of industry, which does not appear to have touched the other crafts until the revolution caused by the plague.

The separation of interests which arose between the masters and the workmen appears in craft ordinances on the subject of labour and wages. The workmen

were anxious to defend themselves from competition, and to increase the demand for their labour. Accordingly in 1461 an ordinance was made forbidding weavers to employ their wives, daughters and maidens at the loom, 'by the which many of the king's liege people likely syen to do the king service in his wars become unoccupied.' An ordinance of the next year contains a curious notice of the habit of slave-dealing, which appears from time to time in the history of the town. It recites a complaint laid before the mayor, by the journeymen, that certain weavers 'brought in, and put in occupation of the craft, strangers, persons of divers countries, not born under the king's obeisance, but rebellious, whiche been solde to theym as hit were heathen people.' The mayor ordered that for the future no such persons should be brought into the craft. An illustration of the increased power exercised by the masters in the crafts seems afforded by the fact that, by the early part of the fifteenth century, the election of their aldermen had passed away from the whole body of the weavers, and had become vested in the Thirteen principal men of the craft. Nor are the signs of division between the masters and the journeymen confined to matters relating to trade; they appear also in the disputes that arose about the performances of the religious functions of the guilds. In the report of a case laid before Robert Sturmys, the mayor, in 1454, it is stated that 'divers debates and murmurs had arisen between the Masters and Craft of the Cornesers and the journeymen,' because the 'Masters and Craft-holders' sought to deprive the journeymen of their right to provide the light carried in the municipal processions on certain

festivals. The three classes in this entry seem to find their counterparts in the livery or richer masters of the London companies, the householders or smaller masters, and the freemen or yeomen, a term also employed in Bristol for a journeyman. An attempt was being made to reduce the journeymen to a state of subjection, and they knew that, if they were deprived of the right to perform their part in the guild functions, they would at once sink to the position of mere dependents. In this case an arrangement was made which preserved them their ancient right. The vast increase in the wealth of the traders which followed the depopulation caused by the Black Death, and the new importance attached to capital, ensured the triumph of the masters; the crafts fell into the hands of the few, and in the sixteenth century were mere trade companies, in which the position of the members was determined by their wealth.

A change of precisely the same character as that which was wrought in the crafts took place very gradually in the government of the town; it fell into the hands of an oligarchy of capitalists. The institution of the Common Council, the means by which this change was effected, brings us to an important epoch in the history of Bristol. Second only to London of all the cities and towns of the kingdom, Bristol stood in need of an organised system of government. The Great Insurrection had shown how easily a disturbance in the borough might become a source of national embarrassment. The dispute with the lords of Berkeley still led to occasional outbreaks of violence, and the peace and good government of the town required a consolidation of its constitution. Moreover its distance from

Gloucester and Ilchester, where the county courts of Gloucestershire and Somerset were held, was a serious hindrance to business. When a man had property on both sides of the river, he might have to attend both courts, and as travelling was then, each attendance involved a ride, which took up a good part of two days each way, over roads that could not have been much better than droves, for in winter they became so rotten as to be positively dangerous. Besides, the king sometimes had business to transact with the town, which could not well be discussed in these courts, a loan might be wanted, or the advice and consent of the merchants required on some matter of finance. Edward III. was willing to favour Bristol; for he was mindful of the help he had received from its ships, and he was moreover gratified by a sum of 600 marks, which the burgesses paid for the charter they desired. Accordingly in 1373 he invested the town with 'the highest development of corporate authority,' by creating it a county with an elective sheriff and shire jurisdiction. This grant, the first of its kind conferred on any town—for the case of London is a wholly different matter—freed Bristol men from all attendance on the courts of other shires, and from the intrusion of the sheriffs. The next grant of similar privileges was made about twenty years later to York. The mayor was made escheator, and was for the future to make oath before his predecessor in the Guildhall in the presence of the commonalty, instead of before the constable of the castle, provisions which further secured the independence of the town. The new character thus given to Bristol involved a question concerning its representation in Parliament. The obliga-

tion to send members to Parliament was at this period held to be a burden; for the chief business of the members was to grant money, and their constituencies were bound to pay them wages. Was Bristol, now that it was a county as well as a borough, to be forced to return two members in each capacity? The question might well occur; for the only precedent was the case of London, which, at once city and county, returned four members, though, as it happens, not in virtue of its double character. It was therefore expressly granted that Bristol should not be called upon to send more than two members, who were to be at once knights of the shire and burgesses of the borough. The dispute with the lords of Berkeley was at last settled; for a district was assigned to the new county which took in Redcliff and Temple, and the waters of the Avon and the Severn as far as the Steep and Flat Holms.

One other provision of this charter is of considerable importance. The growth of the town and its trade, and the weighty matters that were brought before the mayor, rendered it advisable that he should have some recognised body of counsellors. The narrow oligarchy of the Fourteen had failed to establish itself, and in 1344–5 a council of a different kind had been formed by the mayor, Stephen Spicer, who, 'for the better governance of the town,' by common consent chose forty-eight of 'the chiefest and discreetest' burgesses to be the mayor's counsellors and assistants. Although the principal families of the town were represented in this body, it had no defined powers or position. These were gained by the charter of 1373, which provided that the mayor and the sheriff, with the assent of the commonalty, should

choose a council of forty, and that all ordinances should be made and remedies found by their common consent. Entries in the council-house books imply that for some time the assent of the commonalty was expressed or supposed at each election, and the charter of 1499, which vested the election in the mayor and two aldermen, still provided for it. In theory, then, the constitution of the town rested on a fairly wide basis. In practice the natural tendency to exclusiveness triumphed, the wealthy merchants shut out the commonalty from a share in the government, and the common council became an oligarchical body, which arrogated to itself the election of the mayor and other officers. The change was gradual; it grew up during the fifteenth century, though it was not recognised by charter until the reign of Charles II. The parliamentary elections, on the other hand, did not fall into the hands of the oligarchy; for after Bristol had received its new rank it followed the custom of other counties, and while in London and many other cities and boroughs the right of electing representatives was vested by local usage in a select body of one sort or another, the members for Bristol were returned by the forty-shilling freeholders, after that qualification had been established in 1430, at first alone and afterwards conjointly with the freemen. A right to be admitted to freedom was acquired by birth, by apprenticeship, by purchase, or, in virtue of an ordinance of the fourteenth century, by marriage with the widow or daughter of a freeman.

As regards other changes in the constitution, the ordinances of 1344 declare that no one was to be chosen mayor unless he had been an alderman, and that alder-

men were to be householders. These aldermen were elected by the commons of their respective wards, and discharged certain police duties. They were five in number, for the addition of Redcliff made up five wards.[1] By the charter of 1499 these officers were given a new character. There were to be six aldermen, for the recorder, who was elected by the common council, was added to their number. The other five were to be elected and were to be removable by the mayor and their own body. These aldermen were associated with the mayor as justices of the peace and gaol delivery. I find no evidence that the mayoralty was confined to this new and oligarchical body. By Elizabeth's charter there were to be twelve aldermen, and until 1836 Bristol was divided into twelve wards. The aldermen did not sit as justices in their respective wards, but fulfilled some duties in them connected with the preservation of order. Only those who had held the mayoralty, or were common council-men, were eligible as aldermen: the government and the magistracy were alike oligarchical. The 'brethren of the mayor,' who by the charter of 1373 were the sheriff and two bailiffs, were in 1499 to be two sheriffs and two bailiffs, and in 1531 two sheriffs only: and as such they remained until the election of a single sheriff was ordered by the Municipal Reform Act.

Although the interests of the workmen were now in opposition to those of the masters of the crafts, the town was wholly, or almost wholly, exempt from the rising of the commons in 1381. At the same time the

[1] The Municipal Corporations Commissioners' Report confuses these aldermen with the aldermen of the Weavers, mentioned on p. 81.

ecclesiastical revolt of the Lollards found much sympathy here. John Purvey, a priest of the diocese of Lincoln, the intimate friend and disciple of Wyclif, preached in the town with considerable success. He was a man of learning, and revised and completed Wyclif's translation of the Bible. Casting aside his priestly garb and assuming the dress of a layman, he devoted himself with untiring energy to the evangelization of the people. He was a man of blameless life. The clergy greatly hated him, for the very reason that probably made him especially popular with the Bristol workmen; he was a hard hitter. Again and again his sermons were filled with the contrast:—'True preachers: False preachers,' the one Wyclif's 'poor priests,' the other the whole body of the clergy, monks and friars. Standing, it may be, on the steps of one of the many crosses that adorned the town, the greatest of Wyclif's followers had no careless congregation, as he taught the weavers and mariners of Bristol that the blessing of a priest could not change the substance of bread and wine, that private confession was a newfangled device of the clergy which would bring men's souls to hell, that the authority of the priest depended on his personal holiness, and that vows such as that taken, he may have said, by the anchorite they all knew on Brandon Hill were foolish and presumptuous. Right or wrong, there was nothing extravagant in what he said, and, like his master, with whom he often dwelt, and unlike some of his master's followers, he was, as far as we know, guiltless of pandering to lawlessness and anarchy. He made many converts. The Bishops' Registers at Wells contain processes against some Lollards of Temple fee,

which, though now part of the town, still remained in the diocese of Bath and Wells; these abjured the opinions with which they were charged. While the great mercantile families, and probably the majority of the people, adhered to the old doctrines, the town was, next after London, the stronghold of Lollardy, and from a vague notice by Adam of Usk it appears certain that some of the Bristol Lollards suffered death. Lollard opinions lingered on in the town until the eve of the religious changes of the sixteenth century.

In Bristol and the West generally Lollardy may have been connected with political sympathies; it certainly co-existed with attachment to the cause of Richard II. and hostility to the house of Lancaster. In the first year of Richard's reign Bristol made its first loan to the Crown—the king was but twelve years old—amounting to 500 marks, a matter that was probably arranged more easily from the fact that royal communications were now addressed directly to the sheriff and mayor. The long war, broken only by an occasional truce, and the extravagance of the Court impoverished the Crown, and another loan was made by the mayor and common council in 1379. Able as the young king was, he was idle and fond of pleasure; the government was inactive; and when, in 1386, a French invasion appeared imminent, there was something like a panic. In great haste the king asked for loans, and Bristol contributed 200*l.*—a sum twice as large as that lent by any other town in the kingdom except London. Meanwhile a party of opposition had been formed amongst the barons headed by the king's uncle, the Duke of Gloucester, the policy of the Lancastrian party in the

reign of Edward II. was repeated, and the government was put in commission. Forced to submit while the Parliament was sitting, the king, as soon as it was closed, set himself to form a party of resistance, coming, as Froissart tells us, though the particulars he gives are not trustworthy, with the Duke of Ireland to Bristol, and there enlisting many of the gentry of the West in his cause. Richard failed for the time, but at last, after long waiting, his opportunity came, and he succeeded in establishing a despotism. In 1399 he was at Bristol with a large army on his way to Ireland. Before he left the town he had reason to believe that some disaffection existed in the kingdom. Nevertheless he crossed over to Ireland, leaving his uncle, the Duke of York, as regent. While he was absent his cousin, Henry of Lancaster, returned from exile. Richard's councillors, the Earl of Wiltshire, Bussy, Bagot, and Green, fled to Bristol. The governor of the castle refused to admit them, so they went to the Guildhall and took possession of the town. When the vanguard of Lancaster's army appeared before the walls, the gates were opened. The earl, Bussy, and Green were beheaded at the High Cross; Bagot escaped to Ireland. Lancaster was shortly afterwards proclaimed king as Henry IV. The next year Lord Despenser, who had joined in an unsuccessful plot against the new king, was taken by some Bristol men, while attempting to escape by sea, was brought to the town, and beheaded by the townsmen. He was the grandson of the Despenser executed here in 1326, and his death seems to have been due not so much to political reasons as to the hereditary hatred of the townsmen.

CHAPTER V.

THE GREAT MERCHANTS.

Civil tumults and foreign wars—William Canynges—The Fellowship of Merchants—Yorkist sympathies—The War of the Roses—A private war—An appeal of treason—The pious deeds of the merchants—Their wealth—Their municipal pageants—Desire for knowledge.

THE accession of Henry IV. was followed by a period of civil disorder, which may be said to have lasted throughout the reigns of the three Lancastrian kings, and to have been in no small degree the cause of the final overthrow of their dynasty. In these troubles Bristol, in common with the rest of the clothing districts in the West, where Richard was popular and where Lollardy had taken some hold, appears to have had a full share. Riotous assemblies here and in the neighbouring counties in 1400 called forth special instructions to the magistrates to be active and vigilant. Much discontent was caused by the taxes granted the next year. People expected that the new king would want less money than his predecessor, whereas the Crown was never so poor. The collection of the taxes occasioned a riot in Bristol in which several women took an active share, and at Norton St. Philips wool-fair, which was largely frequented by Bristol dealers, one of the king's officers

was slain. A plot to set up a false Richard, chiefly formed by the friars in 1402, also seems to have found adherents in the town, for some executions connected with it took place here. Inglorious and prolonged wars added to the general trouble. Besides having to send ships to help the king in his fruitless, though not unsuccessful, expedition to Scotland, Bristol was called upon to bear a large share in the long warfare against Owen Glendower. Matters were complicated by our uneasy relations with France; though we were not at war, we were certainly not at peace. Breton pirates filled the Channel, and orders were sent to the mayors of Bristol and other trading towns to impress soldiers to sail in the merchant ships. At last, in 1403, a fleet of ships from Bristol, Plymouth, and Dartmouth, under an esquire named William Wilford, made reprisals off Brest, then sailed on, seized thirty ships laden with wine at Belleisle, and lastly came back to Brittany, where they harried the country, and so returned rejoicing and laden with spoil. Meanwhile a French fleet was cruising about the coast of Wales off Caernarvon, all the country was in the hands of the rebels, and the English castles on the coast were blockaded. Lord Thomas of Berkeley, the admiral of the South and West fleet, with all the ships and men he could raise here and elsewhere, though he had some successes, was unable to relieve them, and the garrisons would have been starved out if two stout Bristol merchants, John Stephens, who was mayor in 1403, and Thomas Saunders had not again and again run the French blockade and brought them provisions.[1] In

[1] Wylie's *History of Henry IV.*, vol. i. p. 432.

return for these and suchlike services, and in consideration of 200*l.*, the king granted the town exemption from the jurisdiction of the Admiralty Court. This was an important matter, for this court, which was not ruled by the common law, appears, like the military court of the marshal, to have constantly encroached on the rights of the people, and in the last reign a petition had been sent from the town, declaring that many had been beggared and driven from England by its proceedings. It is likely enough, too, that matters were now aggravated by the appointment of Lord Berkeley as admiral, and by the constant levies he had to make. The energy with which Henry V. renewed the war with France raised the country from the unhappy position it occupied in his father's time, and the effects of his wise government preserved peace even in his son's reign, until at last they were swept away by the selfishness of contending factions. Eight Bristol ships sailed in the fleet that in 1415 carried his army to the capture of Harfleur and the victory of Agincourt. In the long and inglorious war of the next reign the town took her full share. Defeats and losses followed each other rapidly, until at last, in 1451, Gascony was taken from us. Then a fresh effort was made, and a fleet, to which Bristol contributed as many as thirty-three ships, conveyed an army under the Earl of Shrewsbury to attempt the reconquest of our ancient province. In 1453 the earl fell at Castillon, Bordeaux was taken, and Gascony was finally lost.

Meanwhile, in spite of wars, Bristol flourished greatly. Her foreign trade took three principal directions. A large business was done with Denmark, the

coasts of the Baltic, and Iceland, for the ships that took out her cloth and other merchandise came back laden with stock-fish for the southern markets. France and Spain supplied cargoes of wine and bought drapery, and the commerce with the Mediterranean countries and the importation of spices from the Levant brought large returns, though the trade was risky, for our ships were sometimes plundered by the Genoese. Chief among the Bristol merchants at this period was William Canynges. The grandfather of this famous man was a merchant of no small repute, also named William, who was six times mayor of the town. His father John, twice mayor, died when Canynges was a child, and his mother married another Bristol merchant named Thomas Yonge. By him she had a son, also called Thomas, who became a lawyer and rose to be a judge of the King's Bench, and of whom we shall hear again. There is reason to believe that the Canynges family, whose old home was in Tucker Street, owed its rise to the cloth trade. Canynges, who was perhaps born in 1399, was five times mayor, and twice represented Bristol in Parliament. He had probably a far larger trade with the north of Europe than any other merchant in England. In 1449 Henry VI. wrote to the Master of the Teutonic Knights asking protection for two of his factors then carrying on business on his behalf in Prussia, and the next year, when all trade with Iceland and Finmark was forbidden in virtue of a treaty made with Christian I. of Denmark, a special exception was made in his favour, on account of the great debts due to him from the Danish king's subjects in those parts, so that for two years he had, as far as England was concerned, the virtual

monopoly of the trade. Eleven years later he had nine ships afloat, besides one lately lost off Iceland. The largest of these were the 'Mary and John,' of 900, the 'Mary Radclyf,' of 500, and the 'Mary Canyngys,' of 400 tons. In all he had 2,853 tons of shipping and employed 800 seamen. Even allowing for the different method of computing a ship's burden to that now in use, which would make a deduction of about a third from these figures, the tonnage of Canynges's ships seems almost incredible. Besides his seamen, he employed day by day a hundred carpenters, masons, and other workmen. Nor did he stand alone, for at the same time another merchant named Strange owned 'about' twelve ships.

The foreign trade of the town during the latter half of the fifteenth century, and possibly for a long time before, like each particular craft everywhere, was under the direction of an association. What the exact relationship was between the Fellowship of Merchants of this period and the old Merchant Guild it is hard to say. It may be that the diminution of the number of great merchants consequent on the Black Death, and the concentration of capital in the hands of a few, led to a kind of revival of the ancient society; while it is also possible that the association in one form or other may have been in existence in earlier times, and that when the ancient guild gradually exchanged its mercantile for a municipal character, the greater merchants met together for the regulation of trade apart from the meetings of the governing body of the town. Be this as it may, it is certain that in the time of Canynges the Fellowship of Merchants was held to be most ancient

and honourable; it had its guild, the Fraternity of the Merchants and Mariners of Bristol, which was dedicated to God, our Lady, St. Clement, and St. George, and maintained a priest and twelve poor sailors. To this guild all masters and mariners were compelled to pay a contribution on the completion of a homeward voyage. In common with the crafts, the Fellowship of Merchants was subject to, and received the support and confirmation of, the municipal government, and in 1467, the date at which the records of its present representative, the Society of Merchant Venturers, begin, it received its regulations from the then mayor, Canynges, and the common council, and these regulations accordingly became part of the law of the town. All merchants were bound, under penalty of a fine of one pound of wax, to appear before the master and Fellowship to hear the decrees they made as to the conditions under which trade in certain specified merchandises was to be carried on with strangers, and, as we have seen, the Fellowship was to hold its meetings in Spicer's chapel and chamber on the Back. By the beginning of the next century, the Fellowship, though under the control of the mayor and council, held, probably on lease, the port dues of the town, all foreign trade was carried on under its direction, and all samples of merchandise used in the trade were deposited in Spicer's Hall. A further stage in the history of the Fellowship, the grant of the charter of Edward VI., which made it a corporate company and extended its powers, must be reserved for the next chapter, for the subject is necessarily connected with a new development of Bristol trade.

In common with most of the merchants of Bristol,

Canynges was one of the Yorkist party.[1] The history of the factions that divided the court of Henry VI. assumes a new phase in 1450; for in that year the king's minister, Suffolk, was slain, the Duke of York returned from his government of Ireland, and the Duke of Somerset from his command in France. York endeavoured to secure the succession, and Somerset, the ally of the queen, opposed him, for if the house of York came into power his destruction was certain. In the Parliament of 1451 Bristol was represented by Canynges and his half-brother Yonge, who sat for the town in six other Parliaments; the feeling of the Commons was strongly against Somerset, and Yonge moved that, as the king had no issue, the safety of the kingdom required that an heir to the throne should be declared, and named the Duke of York. Somerset's power, though shaken, was not destroyed, and Yonge was imprisoned in the Tower. During the illness of the king in 1454, York was made protector, and vigorous measures were taken for the defence of the coasts. Robert Sturmys, the mayor of Bristol built 'a stately vessel only for the war,' and a loan was raised from the seaport towns for the protection of trade. To this Bristol contributed 150*l.*, the largest sum paid by any town except London, which lent 300*l.* It is evident that the merchants trusted the Duke of York. The fate of Sturmys's ship illustrates the magnitude of Bristol commerce at this period. In after years he

[1] Local historians assert that Canynges was a Lancastrian, and that he was compelled to change his politics by the success of Edward IV. All trustworthy evidence seems to me to point the other way.

used her for the Mediterranean spice trade, and in 1457 she was 'spoiled' by the Genoese. In return all the Genoese merchants in London were imprisoned, and their goods seized until they had given Sturmys bonds for no less than 6,000*l.*, the amount of the loss he had sustained. When the battle of St. Albans had given York the protectorate for the second time, Yonge complained to the Commons of the wrong he had suffered, and the king directed the council to make him amends.

It was probably in 1456–7 that Canynges did a signal service to the Yorkist cause. Five barrels of gunpowder, four of saltpetre, and two of brimstone had been sent by the Master of the Ordnance to one Henry May, a burgess and merchant of the town, to be sold. May was an Irishman and a Lancastrian, a follower of the Earl of Wiltshire (James Butler, Earl of Ormond), and it was suspected that the consignment was only intended to enable Somerset's party to get the town into their own hands. May and some other Irishmen were disfranchised and fined, and Canynges, who was then mayor for the third time, seized the ammunition and placed it in the treasure chamber of the town, letting York know that he had done so. York was pleased at this, and bade the mayor and common council take the government of the castle and keep Somerset out. This they accordingly did, and some part of the powder was thus used. In 1461, York having fallen at Wakefield, his son Edward collected troops in the Welsh Marches, and sent to Bristol, bidding the mayor and council fit out a fleet to act against Jasper, Earl of Pembroke, which they did at a cost of 500 marks. Pembroke was defeated at Wigmore, and shortly after-

wards the young duke entered London and was proclaimed king as Edward IV. He was at once called upon to fight for his throne. The struggle seemed almost one between the lords of the North and the burghers of the South, between the two discordant powers of Feudalism and Commerce. The cause of the White Rose was upheld at Towton by a force from Bristol, which fought beneath the 'Ship,' the banner of the town, and on the same side were unfurled the 'Harrow' of Canterbury, the 'Black Ram' of Coventry, the 'Dragon' of Gloucester, and the banners of other boroughs, which sent each its contingent to the army of the king. Edward's victory was complete and bloody, and many of the greatest lords in England were among the slain.

Late in the summer Canynges, then mayor for the fourth time, prepared another expedition to the Welsh coasts to be ready against the king's coming into the Marches, and so the gunpowder was again useful, as we are told in the account given in the 'Great Red Book' of 'the dispendinge of the gonnepowdyr that was hadde from Harry Maye,' drawn up in answer to a demand from the exact king as to what had become of of it. Then Edward came to Bristol, and was entertained there with great magnificence. One sight that he is said to have watched from a window in St. Ewen's Church was such as he loved; for it was the passing of two Lancastrians, Sir Baldwin Fulford and John Heysant, to their deaths; they had been tried by a special commission of which Canynges and Thomas Yonge were members. Edward was sorely in need of money, and he left Bristol richer than he came by 3,000

marks, at least so William Wyrcestre, a burgess of the town then living, says. This vast sum, for the value of money at the time must be remembered, was paid him by Canynges *pro pace sua habenda*, words which have given rise to the vain theory that this staunch Yorkist had taken part with the king's enemies, but which simply mean that he had received this sum for the king, probably during the year of his mayoralty just ended, and as the king's escheator, and had paid it over 'to obtain a quittance.'

A special characteristic of the fifteenth century was the continual private warfare that disturbed the kingdom. Instances of feuds of this sort occurred in every part of the kingdom, and one of them, the long and bitter strife between the Talbots and the Berkeleys, has some connexion with our subject. The quarrel rose from a claim made by Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, to the Berkeley estates. On Warwick's death this claim devolved on his daughter, Margaret, the second wife of John Talbot, the Earl of Shrewsbury who fell at Castillon, and her sisters. After some skirmishes, Shrewsbury's son, Lord Lisle, surprised Berkeley Castle in 1451, seized James Lord Berkeley, and his sons, carried them into Bristol, and imprisoned them in the Grey Friars house until Berkeley signed certain bonds in the presence of the mayor. The next year, while her husband and son were fighting in France, Lady Shrewsbury caught Lady Berkeley, a daughter of Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, and imprisoned her at Gloucester, where the poor lady died broken-hearted. The deaths of Shrewsbury and Lisle in France, and of Berkeley at home, brought about a kind of truce.

Then after awhile the feud was carried on by William Lord Berkeley and Lord Lisle, the grandson of the Earl and heir of the Countess of Shrewsbury. The Berkeley cause was popular in Bristol for several reasons. The Berkeleys were Yorkists and the Talbots Lancastrians. Moreover, Lisle had married a daughter of the Earl of Pembroke, and there was a feud between the town and the Herberts, for in 1469 one of the earl's brothers was slain in Bristol in a fray. A Vaughan was then one of the bailiffs, and Herbert's death seems to have been avenged as late as 1527, when William Herbert, afterwards Earl of Pembroke, slew one of the family of Vaughan on Bristol bridge, and got away in a boat. On the other hand, Berkeley's cousin, Sir Maurice, had married the daughter of Philip Mede, a merchant, and thrice mayor of the town. In March 1470, the month of the Lancastrian rising in Lincolnshire, Lisle challenged Berkeley to battle. Then Mede and John Shipward, the mayor, raised the town and led the Bristol men, never backward in a fray, to the help of the Berkeleys, whose party, thus increased to about 1,000 men, outnumbered Lisle's forces. Berkeley's men gathered on Michelwood Chase, and early on March 20 they saw Lisle and his men come riding down Nibley Hill. Then they broke from the wood and received the enemy with a shower of arrows. Lisle rode with his beaver up, and Black Will, an archer from the Forest of Dean, shot him in the mouth, so that the arrow came out at his neck; he fell and was stabbed to the heart. His men fled with some loss, and Berkeley's force sacked his manor-house at Wotton. Sixteen days after this battle of Nibley Green, as it is called, Lisle's wife was brought

to bed of a dead son, and so the male line of the younger branch of the Talbots ended. Shortly after this the Earl of Warwick fled to France, and six months later Edward in his turn was forced to leave the kingdom; so the battle of Nibley Green excited little attention in the midst of more momentous events.

Although the merchants of Bristol generally were warm adherents of the house of York, a party in the town was, as may have been guessed already from the incident of the gunpowder, on the Lancastrian side; and after Queen Margaret had landed at Weymouth, on April 14, 1471, the day of Warwick's defeat at Barnet, she was received here. She left Bath on Edward's coming to Marlborough, and on entering Bristol sent out scouts to see if she could pass by Gloucester into Wales. It is evident that if the townsmen of Bristol had been all of one mind, and had shut their gates against her, she could not have entered the town; for when she heard that Gloucester was all for its Duke Richard, she decided not to waste time by an attempt to reduce it, and marched to Tewkesbury, where, on May 4, her army was utterly overthrown. As soon as Edward regained the throne, he took notice of the lack of zeal that the town had shown, and wrote to the mayor signifying his displeasure. Nevertheless, at the request of the Duke of Clarence, who represented that the offence was to be laid to the charge of a party only, and not of the town at large, he said he would deal mercifully. Seven of the burgesses were named as principal offenders. One had been slain, probably at Tewkesbury, the rest were to be imprisoned and their goods were to be seized. Among them were John 'Shepherd' (Shipward?),

Robert Strange, and William Spenser, all merchants of note. 'Shepherd's' pardon is extant, and all probably were likewise pardoned on payment of a fine. Spenser's offence, as we shall see, brought him into trouble later.

The concluding years of Edward's reign were marked by exaction and severity, by suspicion and wrongful accusations. A visit from the king in 1475 is said to have cost the town a large sum by way of 'benevolence,' the new device for raising money, and the general state of uneasiness in the country may be illustrated by an event which, three years later, deeply moved the burgesses. The story of this event, which is told at length in the 'Great Red Book' by John Twynyho, the recorder, must be compressed here; but it is worth inserting even in a small volume on Bristol, because it contains a vivid picture of a bit of the life of our town. A certain John Wilkins, a night-walker and a brawler, who had come to live in Bristol with the character of being a 'man-queller in Wales'—he was a bravo or cut-throat—caused much trouble to the bailiffs by his disorderly conduct. At last he was put in prison, and while he was there it was said that, in his idle talk, he had accused that 'noble, famous, and true merchant, William Spenser,' then for the third time mayor, alleging that he had had 450*l.* worth of goods of the late Duke of Clarence and 300*l.* of the late Earl of Warwick. One of the burgesses, Thomas Norton, gentleman, a member of the king's household, hearing this, had some dealings with Wilkins while in prison, and encouraged him to slander the mayor. This Norton was a troublesome fellow, who, after an evil fashion that the king put down sharply, had attached men to himself, 'some by

giving of livery and some by oath,' and he and four of these followers of his had not long before beaten one of the town officers. His place as one of the royal household had, however, saved him from punishment. On March 12, 1478, at five in the afternoon, the mayor and sheriff were sitting in the Guildhall hearing cases, when Norton entered the court and there appealed the mayor of high treason: 'and that,' he added, 'will I make upon thy body good, and if it shall ne pleese the king's most excellent grace to suffer thee to try with thy hands the truth of this appeal for the exiguity of thy wretched person,' then he would maintain his word against any of the mayor's 'comburgesses,' and so he bade the sheriff take him. Spenser, though he was sixty-eight, was not to be frightened, and answered him roundly: 'Thomas Norton, thou liest falsely.' Nevertheless Norton delivered his appeal to the sheriff.

Next day the mayor called the sheriff, the recorder, and the common council together, and declared that he would no longer be 'the king's lieutenant' till he had cleared himself of the charge; so he gave his sword of office to the sheriff and bade him take him to prison. In those days the bond between men of the same town was closer than it is now, and all present when they saw the mayor thus deliver himself up wept, 'as sons for their natural father.' Then at eleven o'clock they went in sorrowful procession through the open market, all the people lamenting as they passed, and so led the mayor to the prison and there left him. It was necessary to protect Norton from general indignation, and the relation in which the crafts stood to the government of the town and the kind of police duty performed by their

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masters is illustrated by the action of the sheriff and recorder, who on the same day called all the masters of crafts before them, and charged them, as they should answer to the king, that they should keep the peace towards the appellant. As the next day was Sunday, nothing was done to help the mayor, though perhaps a Bristol man's ox or ass might not have been left in a pit on that day. On Monday, however, messengers were sent to the king at Shene to bespeak his favour, and these were followed by letters setting forth the mayor's innocence and all Norton's ill-doings, even to the fact that 'he lieth in his bed till it be nine or ten at the bell daily, as well the holidays as the working days, not attending divine service.' Norton failed to make his accusation good before the council, and on the 21st the king sent his order for the mayor's release. Hard as the messengers rode, they did not arrive in Bristol from Shene till the 24th. Then forthwith 'the sheriff, the recorder, and common council, with thousands of people in the most glad and joyful manner,' went to the gaol 'and brought the sword to the mayor, and with great joy and gladness conveyed him to the Guildhall.' There the king's letter was read, and all the people when they heard it lifted up their hands in thankfulness to him.

Life in Bristol in the fifteenth century was deeply tinged with religion. The merchants of the town engaged largely in church-building and other like good works. Few of the towers for which the neighbouring county of Somerset is famed excel that which John Shipward built for St. Stephen's, and the tower of St. Werburgh's, of about the same date, would in many

other towns have been held a noble ornament of the street in which it stood. In 1460 the rich upper stage was added to the tower of Temple Church, and the weight of it caused the structure to incline. Of the many churches that were more or less rebuilt during this period, mention can only be made here of St. Mary Redcliff, justly declared by Queen Elizabeth to be 'the fairest, the goodliest, and most famous parish church in England.' The thirteenth-century church, of which some remains still exist, was rebuilt by William Canynges the elder, from the 'cross aisles downwards,' in 1376. His work was carried on by his more famous grandson, and the fall of the spire in 1446, and the destruction it made, probably determined Canynges to rebuild the whole church, with the exception of the transept, aisle-wall, and porch on the south side—a work carried out under the master-mason Norton, and on which no doubt the 100 workmen he paid daily were largely employed. Among other good deeds, Canynges was a bountiful benefactor to the collegiate church of Westbury-on-Trym, which had been refounded by his friend, the learned Bishop Carpenter. There he spent his last years, for in 1467 he retired from the world and received minor orders; the next year he became a priest, and a year later was collated by his friend to the office of dean of the college. The story that he took orders to avoid a second marriage commanded by the king may have arisen from idle gossip. His wife and his two sons were dead, and his religious feelings and the advice of Carpenter may well have led him to give up the things of this world for those of the world to come. He died in 1474

Numerous chapels built for special services adorned the town, and many merchants founded chantries in its different churches. The wills of the burgesses are full of bequests both to the Church and the poor; great care was taken to ensure an honourable funeral, and gifts were left for those who attended. In John Shipward's will, dated 1473, to take one example, after legacies to the mother church of Worcester, and his parish church of St. Stephen, to which he was so large a benefactor, come 10*l.* for bed clothes for the poor of the parish, 5 marks to be given in bread and ale at his funeral, and the same at the 'months mind,' when a commemorative service was performed; twenty-four poor men were to bear torches at the funeral, each to receive a gown of black frieze with a hood of white and 4*d.*, and throughout the month two men were to be paid to bear torches in the church; missals, plate, and gorgeous vestments were left to the church, and money to all its officers, to every priest and parish clerk in the town, to the four Orders of Friars, in each case if present, together with gifts to every prisoner and inmate of an almshouse; a chantry service was founded in St. Stephen's, and lastly money was left to the mayor and every officer of the town, each according to his degree, that attended the funeral. Pilgrimages were favourite acts of devotion with the burgesses. In the popular shrine of St. Anne at Brislington, twice visited by Henry VII., were the candles offered by the Weavers and Shoemakers, and many 'ships' and 'boats' used for incense. Large numbers went further from home, and many ships left the port laden with pilgrims to Compostella, and even to Jerusalem. One of these, in

which the owner, a rich merchant named Sturmys, sailed with 106 pilgrims, was wrecked on her way back from Palestine, and thirty-seven men were drowned.

The richer merchants lived magnificently enough. Below their houses were vast cellars for merchandise, now built with groined stone roofs, on the ground floor a warehouse, or two or more shops open to the street, and above a parlour and bedrooms, the whole being generally three stories high, besides attics in the sharply pitched gables. Behind stood a lofty hall, fit for a royal banquet, the walls often rich with hangings, and the roof of carved timber and plaster adorned with designs. Some of the grander houses had each its tower; in the grandest of all, built by Canynges, some remains of which are still to be seen in Redcliff Street, there were four bay-windows and parlours in the tower. In the smaller houses the hall was above the shop. The plate cupboard of a rich merchant must have been a fair ornament to his hall; for Thomas Baker, grocer, by his will, dated 1493, distributed no less than 350 oz. of silver among his children in bowls, cups, salt-cellars, and spoons.

The municipal ceremonies of Bristol were marked by the same mixture of religion, stateliness, and good cheer as the lives of the burgesses. At the election of the mayor on September 15, the council—for the right was now vested in that body—met at the Guildhall, and there the outgoing mayor exhorted all, 'with a *pater noster* and an *ave*,' to pray for the guidance of the Holy Ghost. The new mayor did not take office till Michaelmas day, to give him time 'to make his purveyance of his worshipful household.' On that day, 'at the stynting of the commen bell,' the outgoing mayor took

leave of the council in a set form, and the new mayor took the oath and received the insignia of his office, the king's sword, the hat and seals. Then all brought the new mayor home with trumpets and clarions, for the city kept its minstrels to play before the mayor until 1835. After dining, part with the old, and part with the new mayor, the company went to St. Michael's Church to offer; then met again at the new mayor's house for cake-bread and wine, and so each man went home in time for evensong. The high place held by the Weavers is illustrated by the meeting of the mayor, sheriff, and council on St. Katharine's eve to attend evensong in Temple Church, when, after drinking in the Katharine (or Weavers') hall, each went home to receive the Katharine players and reward them for their plays. These plays must have been some of the mysteries or pageants performed by the craftsmen of most English towns; they were founded chiefly on the Apocryphal Gospels, and were extremely popular with our forefathers. It is interesting to find that there was a close connexion between our town and Coventry, famous not merely as Bristol was for its cloth, but also for its mysteries. Many names in the roll of one of the Coventry guilds have 'of Bristol' appended to them, and it may well be that some at least of the Coventry plays, the most famous of which was performed by the Shearmen and Tailors, may have been represented at Bristol by the Weavers and other companies.

The festival of the Boy Bishop, who was elected on St. Nicholas day, and who held office until Innocents' day, was kept with much ceremony. On the day of his election the mayor, sheriff, and council attended at St.

Nicholas's Church to hear the boy's sermon and receive his blessing. After dinner they met and played dice upon the mayor's counter, probably a brazen table in front of the Tolzey, the sheriff's court-house, like those that now stand before the Exchange, until the bishop and his 'chapel,' or boy-choir, came there to sing and the bishop to give his blessing; then the boys were served with bread and wine, and all went to the bishop's even-song. Attendance at Advent sermons ended with a joyous observance of Christmas, and a special proclamation for peace was made during the reign of the Lord of Misrule: none were to go mumming with closed masks, nor be abroad without lights after curfew had sounded from St. Nicholas's Tower, nor to carry arms during the festive season. Among other seasons of ceremony, the eves of St. Peter and St. John were much observed. On these nights the watch was kept by the different crafts, each man wearing his best clothes and his harness, and in virtue of an ordinance made by Canynges each craft (26 are enumerated) received from the sheriff a certain quantity of wine, differing in amount according to the position of each, to be drunk in their several halls. Grander than all the rest were the ceremonies of Corpus Christi day; for then there was feasting through all the town, and a long procession in which the guilds exhibited their pageants. Every holiday, indeed, was kept with gladness and religious observance. Busy as the merchants were, they never grudged these days, on which the mayor and his brethren would go out duck-hunting on the pond at Treen-mill (now turned into Bathurst Basin), or look on at wrestling and other sports.

A town where feasting and solemn shows were kept up so well found no difficulty in receiving its sovereigns in a fitting manner; and when Henry VII. came to Bristol in 1486, he was welcomed with many pageants, among which that presented by the Shipwrights was conspicuous. The king spent Corpus Christi day in the town, and went in procession round College Green, and there all the crafts and the whole people came together, and the Bishop of Worcester preached a sermon to them on the Green. In spite of all this rejoicing, matters were not altogether well with the town. There were complaints of the decay of the cloth trade, and besides this many large ships had lately been lost. The king, who took deep interest in commercial matters, encouraged the merchants, advised them to build new ships, and said that he would help them. Eight years afterwards he conferred a signal benefit on all English traders by the commercial treaty with Flanders called the 'Great Intercourse.' Even while the Bristol merchants talked with the king, a larger sphere for their energies than they had ever known before was about to be opened to them; and, though they could not foresee what the discoveries of the next few years would do for their town, the minds of some of them were already filled with thoughts of commerce with islands they hoped to reach by westward voyages. This subject however must be left for another chapter.

Meanwhile a change, soon to be quickened into more vigorous life, had already come over England. A desire for learning was beginning to be widely diffused. While great men patronised scholars, and in many cases kept them as members of their households, the

merchant class as it grew in wealth recognised in various ways the excellence of knowledge, hitherto almost exclusively confined to the clergy. At Bristol rules were drawn up in 1464 for the Guild of the Kalendars, providing for the management of their free library, and for the weekly delivery of a public lecture by the prior, who was besides to be ready at all times to explain the Scriptures to any that asked him. To meet the new desire after knowledge, many small books were written, compendiums, abstracts and the like; these were rendered cheaper by the introduction of linen-made paper in place of parchment, and the circulation of them was soon to be rapidly increased, for Caxton was at work before the death of Canynges. Some little books and treatises were written by a Bristol burgess named William Wyrcestre [Worcester], or Botoner as he preferred to be called after his mother's family, which held a good position in Coventry. This diligent antiquary, who was born in Bristol about 1415, was patronised by the famous knight Sir John Fastolf, of Caistor in Norfolk, who sent him to Oxford, and then took him into his household. Towards the end of his life Wyrcestre, who, it should be noted, was a layman, settled in his native town in a house near St. Philip's churchyard. There he had gardens of herbs, for he was a man of science and practised medicine. He spent much time in surveying the town, measuring it all by paces, and his book of notes called his 'Itinerary,' which has been preserved to us, is of the greatest service to all students of Bristol history. Another of his works is the 'Annals of English Affairs,' from 1324 to 1491, the year probably of his death. With the new and eager desire after

knowledge which now prevailed must be connected the encouragement given at this time to the experiments of the alchemists. Famous among these searchers into what they believed to be the secrets of the physical world was Thomas Norton, a Bristol alchemist, who claimed to have found out the elixir of life and the art of transforming metals, and who in 1477 finished a long poem on his discoveries. Nevertheless death found him out, and, it is said, found him in poverty.

CHAPTER VI.

A NEW WORLD.

Character of the period—Religious discord—Dissolution of the monasteries—Bristol an episcopal see and a city—Sacrilege and knavery—Protestant martyrs—Visit of Queen Elizabeth; pageants and plays—The sweating sickness and years of scarcity—The Cabots—Discovery of North America—Robert Thorne—Trade with the Canaries and elsewhere—The Merchant Venturers—Warfare with Spain—Colonisation of Newfoundland—Colonisation of New England.

THE sixteenth century is a remarkable period in the history of Bristol both as regards religion and trade. It was a period of change throughout the kingdom. Men cast aside the thoughts and feelings of the Mediæval Church and adopted the spirit of Protestantism; authority gave place to individuality, the teaching of the Church to each man's faith in the Divine Master. This change in the character of religion found expression in changes in the form of worship. Little, perhaps far too little, value was for a time set on ordinances, nothing that was not purely spiritual seemed worth preserving. This religious revolution implied a vast quickening of thought; individually men were strongly alive each to his own spiritual position; they learned and judged for themselves; collectively the nation awoke to a certain proud self-consciousness. National pride was partly gratified and partly aroused

by the separation from Rome. Further, in the history of seaport towns such as Bristol, this period is marked by voyages of discovery and a search after new channels for trade. Eagerness for the discovery of new lands was not born of the Protestant movement—indeed it preceded it, and was an outcome of the passionate desire after knowledge that marked the second half of the fifteenth century. Maritime adventure, however, received a special character from religion: our seamen disputed with the Spaniards for the trade of the New World, and the Reformation gave their quarrel something of the character of a religious war. It will be convenient first to give some notices of the progress of the Reformation as it affected Bristol, and then to attempt a sketch of the part that Bristol men bore in maritime adventure and in the rapid increase of trade consequent on the discovery of new countries.

Lollardy in its religious aspect had probably not entirely died out in Bristol when, in 1534, all the town was moved by the preaching of Hugh Latimer, then parson of West Kington, in Wiltshire. His enemies said that he declared that there was no sensible fire in hell—this charge he denied altogether; that saints were not to be worshipped, that pilgrimages were of no avail, and the like: as to these matters he explained that he had really spoken against the abuse of such acts of devotion. His sermons made a great stir; many approved of them, and he was bidden to preach before the mayor at Easter. This his enemies found means to prevent by persuading the archdeacon to forbid him preaching in the town without the bishop's license. The activity of the Gospellers, as the reforming teachers

were called, was met by the other party. Popular preachers were employed to visit the places where any of them had been preaching, and to contradict their doctrines. One of the most famous of these priests, named Hubberdin, was sent for to come to Bristol. He was a preacher of a type that was common enough; his sermons, his enemies said, were full of 'tales, fables, dialogues and dreams'; he was noisy and full of antics, so that his preaching seemed like 'a sort of interlude.' He only stirred up strife, and the commissioners appointed to inquire into these disputes reported to Secretary Cromwell that 'many favoryd Latomer and hys new maner of prechynge, and other many favoryd Hyberdyne yn hys olde maner of prechynge,' adding that both parties had become so 'ardente' that it would be well if the king would provide 'sume convenyante remedy.' A preacher of a different sort, though on the same side as Hubberdin, was Roger Edgeworth, who soon after this delivered several sermons at Redcliff Cross, although, he says, he was 'interrupted by the confederacy of Hugh Latimer, then aspiring to a bishopric.' About this time, too, George Wishart, who had fled from Scotland to escape persecution, preached in St. Nicholas Church, and 'brought many of the Commons of this towne into a greate errour.' He was convicted of heresy, and did penance by bearing a faggot in St. Nicholas and Christ Church, and in the parishes of the two churches. So discord and debate waxed hot in Bristol, as in many other parts of the kingdom.

By the time of the dissolution of the monasteries three of the Bristol friaries had fallen into poverty. When the royal commissioner, Richard, suffragan bishop

of Dover, came to the town, such an outcry was raised about the debts the friars owed that he agreed that the mayor should have the goods contained in the houses valued and sold for the creditors; all that was found at the White Friars was barely enough to pay the debts of the house, though they only amounted to 16*l.* Although the Grey Friars were unwilling to surrender their house, the commissioner did not expect that they would put him to trouble, for the prior, he knew, owed a debt of twenty marks, which he was unable to pay. As in several of the other smaller houses in England, the poverty of the Austin Friars had been brought about by the dishonest dealing of a self-seeking prior. In this house, which stood just inside Temple Gate, and which has been confused by some local historians with St. Augustine's Abbey, the prior, who was also the head of the priory at Richmond, and so a near neighbour of the Court, had obtained from the king a grant of his office for life, and had within three years sold the goods of the house to the value of more than 100 marks, so that he had well nigh stripped it of everything. The unsatisfactory state of these houses probably made the townsmen think that their fall was no great evil. With two of the more important religious foundations the town had had some disputes. The Grand-prior of the Hospital had not long before this tried to revive the ancient right of sanctuary in Temple Street, and also claimed other privileges; his attempt was defeated by the judges. Nevertheless it was no doubt held to be a matter of rejoicing when the possibility of such claims was finally removed and 'Temple fee was broken.'

In the surrender of St. Augustine's Abbey Bristol was

more deeply interested. A dispute had arisen in 1493 between the convent and the town, the prior, Newland, alleging that the mayor's officers had infringed the sanctuary of the abbey, which extended over the present College Green, and that his house had suffered divers other wrongs. The affair, which cost both parties much money, ended in the victory of the town. The surrender of the house, which took place December 9, 1539, besides putting all troubles of this kind out of the question for the future, was the means of adding a new dignity to Bristol. Henry VIII., when he laid hands on the possessions of the monks, did not intend to rob the Church of all that thus came into his power. With his own hands he drew up a grand scheme for the foundation of a large number of new bishoprics, each with its cathedral and chapter, to be endowed with the wealth of the monasteries. This scheme came to very little, and the larger part of the monastic lands went to the 'new men' of the Court, or to wealthy merchants. Six new bishoprics, however, were founded, and of these Bristol was one. All the county of Bristol, whether locally in Gloucestershire or Somerset, together with the county of Dorset, was included in the new diocese, and by a writ dated June 4, 1540, the abbey church was made the cathedral with the name of the Church of the Holy Trinity. The church had already lost its nave and aisles, which seem to have been pulled down by some of the later abbots, in order to build them anew. The rebuilding has at last been accomplished by the liberality of men of our own day. Paul Bush, a canon of Sarum, and formerly a friar, was made the first Bishop of Bristol; a dean was appointed and a chapter

of six canons formed. By the same writ the town of Bristol was, as the place of an episcopal see, raised to the dignity of a city. In 1836 Dorset was taken from the diocese of Bristol, Bedminster, which included Redcliff, was restored to Bath and Wells, and the sees of Gloucester and Bristol were united. Another change in 1845 made Bedminster part of the united diocese: and a further change which will again give Bristol a bishop of its own, is, there is reason to hope, not far off.

Sweeping as some of the changes were that were made by Henry VIII., the reformation of the Church in his reign made little, if any, advance as regards doctrine, and, oppressive as his rule was, still it was the rule of a man who in good and evil alike represented the spirit of the nation. In the reign of his son all this was different. Changes inspired by divines of foreign communions were precipitately enforced, and the government was in the hands of a few unprincipled courtiers who allied themselves with the advocates of religious reformation. Many records exist to prove the quick progress of ecclesiastical change in Bristol: the ornaments of her churches were defaced, the altars pulled down, the wall paintings smeared over with white lime. Here, as everywhere else, all chantries and free chapels were confiscated; all guilds were suppressed, and their possessions were given to the Crown. The trade companies of course continued to exist, but they lost the organisation and the means which enabled them to perform acts of religion and mercy. All that tended to lighten the lot of the working class was ruthlessly sacrificed to the greed of the new nobles, who robbed God and the poor alike.

The suppression of chantries and guilds was followed by the plunder of the churches of the city, which were rich in plate, given by the merchants for anniversary services, and for the use of various fraternities. In Trinity Church alone was seized plate amounting to 434 oz. in weight, and other churches were despoiled in the same fashion. All the silver was sent to the mint at Bristol. This brings us to another of the abuses of this evil period of our history—the coinage was shamefully debased. Sir William Sharington, the controller of the Bristol mint, took advantage of this; he received all the plate brought to him from the churches of Bristol and Somerset, and issued it in base money, the silver money for England containing only one-third, and for Ireland one-fourth of fine metal. Besides this, he withheld certain sums from his books every month, so that his gains must have been large. He entered into an agreement with the king's uncle, Lord Seymour, the Lord High Admiral, who was plotting to overthrow his brother, the Protector Somerset. Sharington promised to coin silver to enable Seymour to carry out his plans, and actually advanced him 2,800*l.*, while the admiral in return was to stand his friend in case the council inquired into his doings. This affair of the Bristol mint led to Seymour's ruin, for his accomplice made a full confession. Seymour was beheaded; Sharington was pardoned. The debasement of the coinage led to a rise in prices, and this aggravated the distress caused by the enclosures of common lands and a general revolution in husbandry. Prices rose enormously, and these causes, combined with religious grievances, produced the rising of the lower class in the West country in 1549. In

this insurrection Bristol had little part. In one of the calendars of the city it is said that a number of young men broke down several enclosures in the neighbourhood. This may have been the case, for though the insurrection in the West was mainly a religious movement, while that in Norfolk arose from social causes, there was some breaking down of fences in the western counties. Bristol people, however, had good reason for keeping quiet: a force of 300 Italians lay in the city ready to march under Lord Grey against the Devonshire insurgents; for the employment of foreign mercenaries within the kingdom is one of the many stains on the wretched government of the time. In Devonshire, as may be seen in the volume of this series on Exeter, the insurrection was a serious matter, and the Bristol merchants lent Lord Russell a large sum for the purpose of suppressing it.

The reaction that took place on the king's death affected Bristol in common with the rest of the kingdom, and the vestry books of various churches record how altars and images were set up again, and new manuals, processioners, and legends were bought by the churchwardens. Bishop Bush was a married man, and, knowing that this made his deprivation certain, he wisely retired. Some at least in the city saw the return to the old form of worship with heavy hearts. Although the new Bishop, Holyman, would take no part in persecution, four persons certainly, and according to some accounts five, were put to death as heretics. They were burnt on St. Michael's Hill, on the site of the present Highbury Independent Chapel. Others, no doubt, were forced to do violence to their consciences; one poor man

(all the Bristol martyrs belonged to the working class, and this was generally the case with the martyrs among the laity) who recanted to save his life was driven mad by remorse and drowned himself. Queen Mary soon became unpopular, and though the persecution of the Protestants was one cause which made men rejoice at her death, it was not the only one. Her reign was marked by national humiliation; and the influence of Spain, consequent on the marriage of the queen with Philip, must have been peculiarly annoying to the Bristol merchants; one instance of this influence, the shabby treatment of Sebastian Cabot, will be noticed later.

Elizabeth, on the other hand, was, like her father, in full accord with her people. Her constant progresses to different parts of her kingdom were occasions of rejoicing that was no mere matter of form, for men felt that she was jealous for the honour of the country. In one of these progresses she paid a visit to Bristol, and her reception here illustrates one side of the life of our city as well as of the character of the queen. The visit had been planned some months before, and Elizabeth evidently looked forward to it with much interest. The city, therefore, had time to prepare the 'gests.' The queen came on Aug. 14, 1574, and was met at Lawford's Gate by the mayor, aldermen, and the trade companies marching under their proper ensigns. At the High Cross, Fame, represented by an 'excellent boy,' made a speech, in which he expressed the joy of the citizens:—

Asid they set thear townishe trashe and works of gredy gayen,
And turned their toils to sports and mirth and warlike pastimes playn.

At St. John's Gate three more boys, Salutation, Gratulation, and Obedient Good-will, had speeches; Good-will, however, could not make his speech, because there was no time for it; and so the queen was conducted to her lodgings in John Young's 'great house' on St. Augustine's Back. As she entered the house 300 soldiers fired their muskets, and the signal was answered by 130 'cast pieces,' the cannon of the castle and on the city walls. The next day, which was Sunday, the queen heard a sermon in the cathedral, and an 'imme,' composed for the occasion, which was sung 'by a very fine boy.' The grand show prepared by the city consisted of the siege of two forts, erected for the purpose in the Avon, near the junction of the Frome. This siege was allegorical, and divers speeches were made in the course of it. During its progress a gentleman swam across the river with a book of these speeches, that the queen might understand what was going forward. Although the pageant lasted two, and according to another account three, days, Elizabeth does not seem to have been wearied of it, but as it was 'verie costlie and chargeable, especially in gonnepowder, liked verie well of.' Some of the speeches could not be spoken 'by means of a schoolmaster who envied that any stranger should set forth the shows,' and so evidently refused to teach the actors. The part that schoolmasters took in preparing pageants is illustrated in *Love's Labour's Lost*: it certainly seems hard that our Bristol Holofernes should have been slighted on such an important occasion. Shows of this sort the queen beheld in many other places. Bristol, however, could offer her one sight not to be matched elsewhere except by London. For

before she left, at the end of a week's visit, she went down with three splendid galleys to Kingroad and saw the shipping. Pageantry, as we have seen, had no small place in municipal life in Bristol. The 'mysteries,' however, such as there is reason to believe were acted here by the Weavers and others, were now dying out. Nevertheless the taste for dramatic representation was gratified by the visits of several companies of players during this reign, and among these it has been proved that Shakespeare and his company were here in 1597. At first the actors who came to the city used to perform in the Guildhall; early in the next reign there was a regular playhouse in Wine Street, which was let at 30*s*. a year.

In contrast to pageants and plays is a darker side to this period in our city's history. Throughout the whole century the sweating sickness and the plague broke out constantly in this country. The sweating sickness was bad here in August 1535, and Henry VIII., who was at Thornbury that month, did not dare to enter the city, for he was mortally afraid of infection. The year after Queen Elizabeth's visit there was a terrible visitation of the plague. Again, in 1603–1605, in the course of about a year and a half, it carried off more than 3,000 persons. The violent outbursts of these distempers are worthy of special note, because they were largely due to the disgustingly unclean habits of the people, and the bad ventilation of their houses. While the sweating sickness fell heavily on towns, it generally spared agricultural districts, where closeness and dirt were not so mischievous; and as it proved especially fatal to the rich and well nourished, the havoc that it made in Bristol suggests, what was no doubt the fact, that the

mass of the inhabitants lived highly compared with the labourers in the country. At the same time, they suffered from years of special scarcity, and from the continual rise in prices that marked this period. Besides the diminution of the amount of corn grown, owing to a widespread change in agriculture, prices were raised by the very means taken to keep them down. The exportation of corn was forbidden; no sales were allowed except in the market, buying to hold and resell was punished, and prices were fixed by authority. All this meddling only made fluctuations more violent. In 1588 wheat was sold here at 2*s.* 2*d.* a bushel; in 1596 it was at 8*s.*, and rye, the breadstuff of the poor, at 6*s.* 8*d.* The next year prices are said to have risen extraordinarily; wheat was at 16*s.* and rye at 11*s.* a bushel. A general rise in prices naturally followed; cloth caps, which were largely made in Bristol, rose from 14*d.* to 2*s.* 6*d.*, and a pair of shoes which formerly fetched 6*d.* was worth 12*d.* The merchants of the city did much for the relief of the distressed both by gifts and prudent management. In 1596 John Whitson bought 3,000 qrs. of Danzig rye and sold it for the provision of the city, applying the profits to public purposes; and the next year the executors of Alderman Kitchin gave 100 marks a week for the support of the poor. At this, as at all times, the merchants of Bristol are distinguished for their princely munificence. The new interest of the laity in education, of which a notice has been given in the last chapter, is illustrated by the foundation of the Free Grammar School, completed by 1536, the work of Robert Thorne and his son Nicholas, who, as we shall see, are to be remembered for other

reasons also. In 1586 John Carr founded Queen Elizabeth's Hospital, on the model of Christ's Hospital in London, and in the next reign the Red Maids School, so called from the red dresses of the girls, was founded by John Whitson. It is impossible to attempt to give an account here of the charities that were established for the relief of the bodily wants of the poor during this period.

When the Bristol merchants complained of their poverty to Henry VII., they could not foresee that their city was even then about to enter on a glorious era of maritime adventure and of extended trade. Towards the close of the fifteenth century there was a widespread belief in the existence of lands beyond the Atlantic, and men speculated on the possibility of reaching the eastern shores of Asia and the kingdom of Cathay by sailing westwards.[1] As early as 1480, Wyrcestre declares that, John Jay, his sister's son, and another merchant sent out two ships under 'Llyde, the most scientific mariner in all England,' to sail from Bristol to 'the island of Brasylle to the west of Ireland,' and that after a voyage of about nine months (the dates show that we should read weeks) they put in to refit at an Irish port, without having discovered the island.

Other attempts were soon made in the same direction, for the Spaniard De Ayala, writing from England to his sovereigns in 1498, says that the people of Bristol had, for seven years, sent out each year 'two, three, or

[1] In spite of the repeated assertions of local historians and others, it must not be imagined that the Cathay to the south of St. Mary Redcliff has anything to do with the Asiatic Cathay or China; the existence of a Pithay in the same city ought to have prevented such a queer notion. Whatever the first syllable of the Bristol Cathay may mean, *hay* is simply hedge, and so enclosure.

four light ships in search of the Island of Brazil and the Seven Cities' under the direction of a certain Genoese. This was Zuan or John Cabot,[1] the discoverer of North America, a native of Genoa, who in 1476 was naturalised at Venice, after having resided there during the necessary period of fifteen years. Cabot came to live in Bristol for the purposes of his trade, and while there applied for, and on March 5, 1496 obtained from Henry VII. a patent for discovery for himself and his three sons, Lewis, Sebastian, and Sancius, to sail to all parts of the east, west, and north, with five ships at their own cost, under the royal banner, and to take possession of new islands and countries, paying the king a fifth of their gain from each voyage on arriving at the port of Bristol, whither they were bound to return. He set sail in the early part of the May of the next year in a ship said to have been named the 'Matthew,' manned by eighteen sailors, nearly all of Bristol. His son Sebastian probably sailed with him. Land was discovered on June 24. This seems to have been the northern coast of Cape Breton. Here Cabot landed, planted the flags of England and of St. Mark, and the same day saw an island (Prince Edward's Island) which he named St. John's, as it was discovered on the Feast of St. John the Baptist. He seems to have sailed round the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and then returned to England in August, believing that he had been in 'the territory

[1] Everything that is known or has been written about the Cabots will be found in Dr. C. Deane's chapter and critical essay in vol. iii. of the magnificent *History of America*, now in course of publication, under the editorship of Mr. J. Winsor. Although I venture to differ from Dr. Deane's opinion as to the birthplace of Sebastian Cabot, I owe much to his exhaustive treatise.

of the Grand Cham.' Thus our Bristol sailors discovered North America a year before Columbus struck the coast of the southern continent. The king was delighted at his discoveries, and gave him money, so he abode at Bristol in great honour, dressing in silk and being called the 'Great Admiral.' He now had no doubt of being able to reach Cipango (Japan), the land of spices, by sailing along the coast he had discovered, and having received a second patent for himself alone on February 3, 1498, set out from Bristol in May, with, it is said, 300 men and with his son Sebastian. He seems to have been in command of two ships, which were accompanied by others freighted chiefly by the merchants of the town (though some London merchants had shares in the venture), with coarse cloths, caps, and other articles for traffic with the natives. One of his ships proved unfit for the voyage and was sent back. This is the last we hear of him. John Cabot was not wealthy, and his expeditions, even if the king had a hand in the second, must have been fitted out by the merchants of Bristol.

The voyage of 1498 was completed by his son Sebastian. Neither the date nor the place of Sebastian's birth can be fixed with certainty. He is claimed as a native of Bristol, but the most learned American writers on the subject decide against the claim. First, as regards his age, it is argued that he must have been fully twenty-one when his name was included in the patent of 1496, and so must have been born during his father's residence in Venice. But if John Cabot traded much with England before 1476, he may have had a son born in Bristol in 1472, and have taken

him and his mother to Venice in 1476. Then, as regards authorities, Peter Martyr, writing in 1516, says that he was 'genere Venetus,' and that he was brought to England when 'pene infans.' Ramusio, a Venetian official, in the first volume of his *Naviyationi*, published in 1550, gives a report of what he was told Cabot had said in a conversation that took place some years before—namely, that he came to England from Venice when very young, 'yet having some knowledge of the humanities and of the sphere'; and, lastly, Cabot himself, when he was secretly seeking to be employed by the Venetians, told their ambassador Contarini, in 1522, 'I was born in Venice, but brought up in England.' In each of these cases something was to be gained by asserting his Venetian birth, for Peter Martyr, though not a Venetian, would, especially in writing for Leo X., be pleased to make him out an Italian. On the other hand, when he was an old man Cabot told his friend Richard Eden, that 'he was born in Brystowe, and that at iiii years old he was carried with his father to Venice, and so returned again to England with his father after certain years, whereby he was thought to have been born in Venice.' This fits in with what Ramusio says about his attainments: it is confirmed by Stow using a MS. of Fabian now lost, by Edward Haies writing in 1583, and by the inscription on the so-called Holbein portrait. It is evident that Cabot changed his birthplace to suit his convenience. And though it is not a matter we can be sure about, there seems no reason for rejecting the universal belief of English writers of his time that he was born in Bristol.

In the voyage of 1498 Cabot appears to have sailed

north-west, probably along the coast of Labrador, 'until,' according to Eden, 'seyng suche heapes of Ise before hym, he was enforced to tourne his sayles and folowe the west.' He came to a land called Baccalaos (cod-fish), a term which seems to have taken in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, where there were multitudes of big fish which the bears used to catch in their claws just as they still catch salmon in Alaska. Thence he appears to have sailed south as far as 36° N., seeking for a passage to the west, and then returned to England. He brought home three savages to present to the king. Everyone was full of curiosity about these men, who 'were clothed in beasts' skins and ate raw flesh, and were in their demeanour like brute beasts.' Among other curiosities the Bristol mariners also sent hawks, wild cats, and popinjays to the king at Richmond. Patents for discovery were granted to certain Bristol merchants and others in 1501 and 1502. Among them was Robert Thorne, and an expedition fitted out by him and his partner seems to have had some success, for his son, also called Robert, in a letter to Henry VIII., says, 'My father, which, with another merchant of Bristowe named Hugh Eliot, were the discoverers of newe found lands, of the whiche there is no doubt as now plainly appeareth, if the mariners would then have been ruled, and followed their pilot's mind, the lands of the West Indies, from whence all the gold commeth, had beene ours.' About three years after Henry VIII. came to the throne, Cabot entered the service of the king of Spain. An expedition of discovery from England which he is said to have undertaken in 1516, and which, we are told, failed through the 'faint heart' of his fellow-

captain Pert, presents, therefore, some difficulties, and if it was ever planned, probably never set sail. He was employed in Spain as a cartographer, was made a member of the Council of the Indies, and received a large pension. Charles V. appointed him pilot-major, and he attended the famous conference held at Badajoz to decide the longitude of the Moluccas. In 1526 he commanded a Spanish expedition to the La Plata river. This expedition, famous for other reasons, concerns us, for Robert Thorne the younger, who was then residing at Seville for the purposes of his trade, invested 1,400 ducats in the adventure, chiefly that two of his English friends might go with it, and bring him back information. Meanwhile the eagerness for discovery languished in England, for the voyages of the Cabots had not been profitable to the merchants who promoted them. Thorne, however, who saw the activity of the Spaniards, was anxious that his own country should not be behindhand, and wrote two remarkable letters, one to the English ambassador, and another, from which a quotation has already been made, to Henry VIII., urging that England should be forward in the work. He wished that an attempt should be made to find a north-west passage by which lands might be reached no less rich in gold and spicery than the islands of the emperor and the king of Portugal. 'If I had facultie to my will,' he wrote, 'it shoulde bee the first thing that I woulde understande even to attempt if our Seas Northwarde be navigable to the pole.' Thorne's trade at Seville does not concern us, for it belonged rather to London than to Bristol.

Between Bristol and Spain, however, trade was now

vigorous. For, besides what may be called the ordinary commerce, the export of Bristol goods, such as cloth, packthread, and soap, and the import from Andalusia of sweet Spanish wines, such as muscadel and bastard, our merchants carried on a large trade with the Canaries by ships of St. Lucar, where they kept agents, who sent out our usual exports, and received in return dyeing drugs, sugar, and kidskins. Nicholas Thorne, one of the merchants who thus used Spanish ships, also had some trade with the West Indies, at least as early as 1526; for he sent out thither armour and other goods to one Tison, who seems to have acted as agent for him, and probably for other Bristol merchants, although this trade must, of course, have been carried on secretly. During the reign of Henry VIII., too, Bristol, in common with London and Southampton, carried on a brisk trade with Sicily, Candia, and the Levant, exporting fine and coarse kersies of various kinds, and receiving silks, rhubarb, sweet wines, sweet oils, Turkey carpets, and spices; and in this trade our merchants largely employed ships of Ragusa, Venice, Genoa, and other states. Commerce with the Levant, however, was carried on at the risk of capture by the Turks, and especially by the Algerine pirates. In 1621 John Rawlins, a Plymouth skipper, who was taken and sold as a slave in Algiers, found there the 'Exchange' of Bristol which had been surprised by the pirates. He and some other English slaves were put on board her as part of her crew; they rose against the Turks, overcame them after a desperate fight, and brought the ship back to England. Some years passed before the new trade of Bristol brought her ships into collision with any Christian state, for our

Newfoundland discovery lay too far north to rouse Spanish interference, and such trade as there was with the West Indies was carried on in Spanish bottoms and was kept secret. In 1552, however, three ships fitted out and freighted at Bristol, sailed from Kingroad, on the second voyage made from England for purposes of traffic with Morocco, carrying linen and woollen cloth, amber, and jet. The general importance of this voyage lies in the fact that it was an open defiance of the papal decision, as yet the law of Christendom, which reserved Africa for its discoverers, the Portuguese. The ships returned safely in spite of the anger of the Portuguese, and of an attack made on them by some Spaniards. As regards our city, this voyage marks the beginning of her African trade. From the Barbary coast her ships slowly worked their way to the Guinea coast, and there, in later times, took in slaves for the Western plantations.

On the accession of Edward VI. Cabot returned to England, and, it is said, took up his residence in Bristol. He received a pension, and had the direction of the maritime affairs of the kingdom. In addition to this, he worked with all his heart on the method of determining longitude and on problems of a like nature, so that he should be remembered rather as an administrator and a man of science than simply as a seaman. The emperor commanded him to return to Spain: he refused, and this refusal was remembered against him. When Philip, the husband of our Queen Mary, came over here in 1557, after his accession to the throne of Spain, Cabot was deprived of half his pension. He probably died the same year. The wonderful impetus given to

trade by the new discoveries took the commerce of the city out of the control of the merchants' fellowship. Every one who could scrape a little money together invested it in some adventure—advanced it, that is to say, to those who were fitting out a trading expedition, or bought some articles to form part of a cargo of merchandise. A 'lamentable representation' was accordingly sent to Edward VI., by the master and wardens of the Fellowship of Merchants, setting forth that 'artificers and handicraftsmen, having other occupations,' and without having served an apprenticeship as merchants, exported goods in foreign bottoms, 'to the defraud of the customs, the scandal of the merchants, and the decay of ships and mariners.' No stress need be laid on the public evils these merchants deprecated, any more than on the fear of the journeymen weavers lest the king should lose good soldiers, of which we have already read. In answer the king granted a charter, incorporating the old fellowship with the title of the Merchant Venturers of Bristol, giving the company self-government, and providing that no artificer or any other person should engage in commerce beyond seas, unless he was admitted into the company, and that right to admission should only be obtained by apprenticeship to the mistery of the merchants. One effect of this grant was, to shut out men of small means from making little ventures on their own account. From henceforth the foreign trade of the city was to be under the control of a society, which naturally opened its doors to few save the rich and the sons of its members. Yet there were special reasons that made this and other like monopolist companies appropriate to the time. In many branches

of foreign commerce every undertaking was in another than a merely technical sense an 'adventure.' And in order to bring these adventures to a successful issue, good counsel, wealth, courage, and public spirit were needed in no ordinary degree. Only a few men possessed either the skill to plan or the means to carry them out, and it was well that the trade of the city should be committed to a society in which the opinions of those who understood such matters would receive due weight, and that the men who were called upon to venture large sums in these undertakings should be relieved from petty competition, in order to give them both the power and the will to act boldly.

The risks which the merchants of those days had to meet were greatly increased by the political and religious enmity of Spain. Even while the two countries were at peace, acts of plunder and revenge were common enough. In 1576, for example, Andrew Barker, a Bristol merchant, who traded with the Canaries, taking out cloth and bringing back wine, heard that all his goods in Teneriffe, to the value of 1,700*l.*, had been seized, and his factor imprisoned by the Inquisition. Accordingly, with the help of his friends, he fitted out two barques, the 'Ragged Staff' and the 'Bear,' and set sail on a voyage of reprisal. He and his men sailed to Trinidad, and thence proceeded along the northern coast of South America, doing what damage they could to Spanish ships. They had good success, for they captured a frigate with gold and silver of 500*l.* value, and took other spoil. Then the crews became mutinous. Barker fought two duels, and after the second, which took place on an island in the Bay of

Honduras, Cox, the captain who sailed with him, refused to allow him and his party to go aboard again until they were ready to sail. While they were ashore, the Spaniards set on them and slew them. Cox then took the command, and sailed for England with the Spanish frigate, carrying a treasure of 2,000*l.* value. The frigate was capsized, and when the company landed, some of them were called to account for Barker's death. While expeditions of this kind are of small account beside the achievements of men like Drake, they all helped to embitter the relations between the two countries. Our city also had a share in a nobler warfare with Spain, and when the Armada attempted the conquest of England, three ships and a pinnace from Bristol, the 'Great Unicorn,' the 'Minion,' the 'Handmaid,' and the 'Aid,' formed part of the Lord Admiral's fleet.

Religious feelings, patriotism, the love of adventure, and the hope of gain, all combined to make war with Spain popular in Bristol. Private men were eager to take their chance in the great game, and many deeds of daring, now well nigh forgotten, upheld the honour of our flag and enriched the adventurers. In the expedition against Cadiz, in 1596, John Hopkins, a fishmonger of Bristol, twice mayor, and a member for the city, sailed his own ship with the fleet, and bore his share in dealing the Spanish king the hardest blow he ever received. His fellow-citizens were delighted at the glory he had won; they met him on Durdham Down, and brought him home in triumph, and they lighted 'all their tallow candells, and a greate bonfire at the High Crosse, very beautifull to beholde.' Another Bristol adventurer was famous in song. A ballad entitled 'The

Honour of Bristol' tells how, probably in 1625, when we were again at war with Spain, the 'Angel Gabriel,' belonging to a Bristol merchant, sailed by her 'captain, famous Netheway,' with forty fighting men, put to flight three Spanish ships, with, it is said, the loss of 500 men. The song tells how, after our seamen had repulsed the first attack, the fight grew fiercer:—

With that their three ships boarded us
Again with might and main,
But still our noble Englishmen
Cry'd out a Fig for Spain!
Though seven times they boarded us,
At last we shew'd our skill,
And made them feel the force
Of our Angel Gabriel.

The Bristol merchants did not follow up the Newfoundland fishery with vigour, for they preferred the fishery off Iceland, which they held to be safer. At the same time they did not wholly neglect the country first discovered through their enterprise. In 1578 Anthony Parkhurst, who had then been there four years running, wrote Hakluyt an account of his doings. Many more English vessels, he said, had of late come there; for his neighbours thought that he must have found some secret source of wealth. Fish were so plentiful that he could spear flounders 'as fast as you can take up fritters with a sharp stick,' and in half a day he could catch enough lobsters to feed a hundred men for a day. In 1610 King James granted a patent for the plantation of Newfoundland to a society called the 'Company of Adventurers and Planters of the cities of London and Bristol.' The scheme was warmly taken up in Bristol,

and John Guy, the first governor, took out a colony from the city. Before long we find that citizens of Bristol had planted a large circuit in Newfoundland, had 'many fair houses' and had done good services there. Nor had the hopes entertained by the Cabots and by Thorne of finding a north-west passage died out among the citizens. Emulous of the expedition sent out by the Londoners under Fox in 1631, the Bristol merchants at the same time sent out the 'Henrietta Maria,' a ship of 70 tons, under the command of Thomas James, in the hope of discovering the north-west passage. James, though a brave seaman, was unskilled in navigating among ice, his ship was injured in Hudson's Bay, and he determined to winter on Charlton Island. There he and his men suffered terribly from cold and scurvy, and were unable to start homewards until the following July. They reached Bristol in safety, and the name of James's Bay commemorates their sufferings and their hardihood.

The part taken by Bristol in the early attempts to colonise the country which came to be known as New England is a matter of special interest. Only two or three Englishmen had reached Norumbega, a name used somewhat indefinitely for the land to the south of Cape Breton, when Walsingh am and his son-in-law Carlile took up the idea of colonising the Penobscot district, in the present State of Maine. A scheme of colonisation was set on foot, to which it was proposed that London should contribute 3,000*l.* and Bristol 1,000*l.*, and although the colony was not planted, the proposal must be connected with Sir Humphrey Gilbert's last voyage and with some efforts made by the Bristol merchants. In 1582 Walsingham wrote to Thomas Aldworth, the

mayor, saying that Gilbert was about to try to discover the coast to the south-west of Cape Breton. He suggested that Bristol should fit out a ship or two barques for the expedition, and advised Aldworth to take counsel with two men who understood what Gilbert's proposal meant. One of these was Richard Hakluyt, the author of the famous collection of 'Navigations, Voyages, and Discoveries,' an Oxford man and a clergyman, who published his first collection in this year, and was soon after most appropriately preferred to a Bristol prebend. Aldworth accordingly talked the matter over with Hakluyt, and then communicated with Salterne, the deputy of the Merchants' Company. Salterne called the merchants together, and when they were assembled, Hakluyt gave them full information about the proposed voyage. They liked the scheme well, and, Aldworth writes, 'there was eftsoons set down by mens own hands, then present, the sum of 1,000 marks and upward, whiche sum if it should not suffice, we doubt not but otherwise to furnish out for this westerne discovery a ship of three score, and a bark of 40 tunne to be left in the countrey.' Gilbert's voyage was disastrous. With this, however, we have nothing to do; the scene in the assembly of the merchants affords a justification for the existence of the society, and an illustration of the way in which the maritime expeditions of the time were set on foot. The Bristol merchants, anxious to open up trade with Norumbega, were easily persuaded by Hakluyt to fit out an expedition of their own. Having obtained 'leave to entermeddle in that action' from Raleigh, the patentee of the vast country then known by the common name of Virginia, they sent out Martin Pring as captain, and

Salterne as their agent, with a small ship and a barque laden with light goods, caps of divers colours, kerseys, tools, beads, and bugles for barter. Pring sailed round Cape Cod into Massachusetts Bay, and anchored in a harbour which has been identified as Plymouth. He named the harbour, afterwards to become so famous, after his fellow-citizen Whitson, and a neighbouring hill after Aldworth. Once he and his men were in some danger from the natives, but they had two great mastiffs, Fool and Gallant, of which the Indians were terribly afraid, and by their help they came off safely. Although they did not stay many weeks, the adventure was successful; for they brought back large quantities of sassafras, which was then much esteemed as a remedy for the plague and other diseases.

Hakluyt was convinced that a colony might be planted in Norumbega, and joined in urging the grant of a charter. Accordingly, in 1606, James granted two patents, one for the London Company for the colonisation of Southern Virginia, the other for the Plymouth Company of knights, merchants, and others of Bristol, Exeter, and Plymouth for the colonisation of the part of the ancient Norumbega, or Northern Virginia, lying between 38° and 45° N. The Plymouth Company was chiefly promoted by Chief Justice Popham and by Sir Ferdinando Gorges of Wraxall, who had a house in Bristol. They sent out 'a tall ship well furnished' belonging to Bristol, under Pring, which was captured by the Spaniards; other ships quickly followed, and the Popham colony was planted upon the Sagadahoc river. Before long this colony was abandoned, though several English, chiefly one would think Bristol men, settled

and carried on trade in the peninsula of Pemaquid. No effectual colony, however, was planted in New England until the arrival of the separatist exiles in Plymouth Bay. After this a scheme of further colonisation formed by the Massachusetts Company led to an emigration under John Winthrop in 1630. On their arrival at Charlestown the new colonists had to pass through a time of severe trouble. Their provisions ran short, and Winthrop dispatched William Peirce with his ship, the 'Lion' of Bristol, to get supplies. During the autumn and winter the colonists were reduced to great straits, and were forced to feed on mussels and acorns. Every one believed that the 'Lion' was either lost or taken by pirates. When matters were at the worst, and 'the governor himself had his last batch of bread in the oven,' on February 5, 1631, the day before that appointed for a general fast, the 'Lion' arrived at Nantasket laden with provisions. She had left Bristol on December 1, and had been delayed by storms. She arrived just in time to save the settlers from starvation. The next year Peirce brought out a hundred and twenty-three new settlers, chiefly, no doubt, from Bristol. He was a man of some importance in the colony, and in 'full communion with the church' at Charlestown. The 'Lion' was afterwards lost off Freak Island, as she was carrying a cargo of fish, beaver, and other skins from New Plymouth, and the letter which Peirce wrote to the settlers on his loss and theirs shows that his religion was not feigned. Meanwhile, as early as 1625, two Bristol merchants, Robert Aldworth and Giles Elbridge, both, probably, men of puritan views, had an agent in the Pemaquid country, and in 1632 they received a grant

from the Council of New England of 1,200 acres near the Pemaquid river, with 100 additional acres for every person they brought over, on condition that they built a town and maintained a colony. The connexion of our city with the coast of Maine, which was strengthened by the grant of New Somersetshire to Sir Ferdinando Gorges, is commemorated by a Bristol in the Pemaquid peninsula; and a county in Massachusetts, and towns in Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, and other States also bear its name.

Before the end of the century, Bristol was doing a large business in the importation of sugar and tobacco from the Southern colonies. A trade of the same character with the West Indies was opened to us by the colonisation of Barbados, the conquest of Jamaica by Cromwell, and the decline of the Spanish power. The western plantations were cultivated by slave labour, and Bristol ships were largely engaged in the trade in negro slaves. Not content with this, towards the end of the seventeenth century, when, according to Roger North, 'all persons, even the common shopkeepers, more or less traded to the American plantations,' the aldermen and justices of the city used to transport criminals, and even slight offenders, and sell them as slaves, or put them to work in their plantations in the West Indies. There is abundant evidence, too, that children were often kidnapped and sent beyond sea by Bristol men, and that the offence was treated with disgraceful leniency by the magistrates. When Chief Justice Jeffreys came here on the Bloody Assizes of 1685, he did one good action; for, after making a violent charge to the grand jury on the subject, he caused the mayor, clad as he was

in his scarlet and fur, to leave the bench, and stand as a criminal at the bar. There he rated him, to the terror and amazement of the citizens, calling him a kidnapping knave. He is said to have fined him 1,000*l.*, and to have bound six aldermen to answer for the like crime at the King's Bench.

CHAPTER VII.

CIVIL WAR AND PARTY STRIFE.

How the city was alienated from the king—Neutrality and decision—A Royalist plot—Fortifications—The Royalist siege—Bristol under Rupert—The Roundhead siege—Sectaries—West India merchants—Petitioners and abhorrers—Surrender of the charters—Revolution.

IF Charles I. found Bristol on the whole in opposition to him, he and his father had done much to provoke the city. Among the various means by which the Crown got the better of the subject, none was more aggravating than purveyance—an old feudal claim to take whatever was wanted for the support of the royal household; it was shamefully abused, the statutes that regulated it were disregarded, and besides the king was a bad debtor. Whitson during his mayoralty, in 1604, did what he could to check the extortion of the purveyors in Bristol, and received a sharp letter from the Board of Green Cloth for his pains. Illegal impositions were placed upon merchandise, and trade was injured by restraints and monopolies, not without some idea of benefiting it, though chiefly for the sake of the money they produced. The enormous increase in the size and wealth of London enabled its trade companies to obtain exclusive privileges to the injury of the rest of the kingdom—an injustice that Whitson vigorously protested against in Parliament.

Matters grew worse in the reign of Charles, who forsook the pacific policy of his father, and was foolish enough to hope to play the master in Europe, and especially on the seas, without the sympathy of his people to back him. This fatal mistake drove him to raise funds by the levy of ship-money. Old constitutional usage allowed the king, as we have seen, in time of war to demand ships with their crews and equipment from port towns. When, however, in 1634 Charles demanded 6,500*l.* from Bristol towards the expense of his fleet, the country was not at war. The reason alleged for this tax was the necessity, which certainly existed, of protecting our commerce against the Turks and other pirates, though the ships were really wanted to uphold Spain against the Dutch. The next year, when the king had no particular foreign policy, another levy was made which was extended over the whole kingdom. Meanwhile every branch of trade was interfered with, and made to yield a profit to the Crown without the consent of Parliament. No part of this interference appears to have been felt more grievous in Bristol than the regulations made about the manufacture of soap, always one of the chief industries of the city. The grievance rose from an unfair monopoly granted to a company of London soap-makers, which was complained of in every soap-making town in the kingdom. In Bristol the soap-makers were forced to agree to produce not more than 600 tons of hard soap a year, to pay the Crown 4*l.* a ton, sell their soap at 3½*d.* a pound, and, worst of all, to use only olive or rape oil instead of fish oil—a restriction that favoured foreign productions to the prejudice of our Newfoundland and other fisheries. The soap-makers were harassed by the London

company, they had to give a weekly account of the soap they produced, and some thirty of them, who made more than the amount allotted to them, were summoned to London, imprisoned, and heavily fined. Fresh trouble was caused by a commission appointed to enquire into the complaints caused by the exactions of the magistrates and the royal officers. The enquiry was conducted by two men of 'mean quality,' who stayed eight weeks in the city, and behaved in a high-handed manner, threatening witnesses, committing them to prison, and keeping them there 'until their leisure served,' or until they signed what was laid before them.

Men were harassed on every side; for Charles paid no heed to the spirit of constitutional independence, the spirit of Protestantism, that had grown up both in secular and religious matters. In religion this spirit manifested itself in Bristol as elsewhere in Puritanism and separation. The earliest rise of religious separation in the city has been traced to a Puritan clergyman of St. Philip's named Yeamans, who encouraged his people to meet for worship at the house of a glover near Lawford's Gate, and of a carpenter in the castle, where they used to pray that God would 'pluck down the lordly prelates.' Chief among them was a grocer's widow, who married another Puritan preacher named Hazard. At their house many Puritan emigrants lodged before embarking for New England. In 1639 Mrs. Hazard left her husband's church, formed a seceding congregation, and the next year adopted Baptist opinions. At the outbreak of the war the congregation numbered 160 members.

When early in 1642 the king wrote to John Locke,

the mayor, complaining of certain 'upstarts in religion,' and exhorting the citizens not to join his enemies, the majority in the city was against him. Some help was sent to Marlborough and Gloucester, and a royalist force under Sir Ferdinando Gorges was refused admittance. At the same time the city did not declare for the Parliament, and an idea seems to have prevailed that it would be possible to preserve an independent and neutral position. Bristol was not without a garrison; for it maintained three companies of trained bands and a volunteer company of 'gentle, proper, and martial men.' The mayor set about strengthening the defences. The castle had long been neglected, and in Elizabeth's reign the yard was inhabited by thieves and beggars. In order to remedy this, the city now bought the castle of the Crown. Old as they were, the walls of the keep were strong, but the defences were weak and out of date. In the first days of December some of the Puritans, anxious to urge matters forward, invited Colonel Essex, the governor of Gloucester, into the city. Richard Aldworth, the mayor, and the council, though on the side of the Parliament, were not prepared to take a decided part, and the royalists, a rich and powerful body, gladly garrisoned Frome Gate, by which it was thought Essex would attempt to enter. The council met, and while it was sitting a crowd of ladies rushed into the room and urged that the gates should be opened. They had an understanding with Essex; he merely made a feint at Frome Gate, and proceeded to Newgate, which was opened to him by their contrivance. He marched his men rapidly up Wine Street, and so Bristol was committed to the side of the Parliament. Before long

Essex was removed from the government of the city, and his place was taken by Nathaniel Fiennes, an able politician and a good lawyer, who unfortunately for himself had turned soldier, and as a son of Lord Saye and Sele, and a man of influence in the Commons, was now entrusted with this important command. He continued the work of fortification, and raised money by taxes, loans, and requisitions, as well as by sequestering the estates of the royalists. Large sums were needed for the expenses of the garrison, and stores were also sent to relieve the Protestants in Ireland.

The Puritans now had everything their own way in religion; they turned out good churchmen, and gave their churches to preachers of their own party, to Hazard and the like. They were soon startled by an unexpected danger. The removal of Essex had created considerable disaffection amongst the officers who served under him. Two of the principal merchants, Robert Yeomans, who had been sheriff the year before, and who held the king's commission to raise a regiment, and George Boucher, took advantage of this to win over some of them to the royal cause. Communications were opened with Prince Rupert, and a plot was made to open the gates to him on the night of March 7. Rupert brought a force of 4,000 horse and 2,000 foot to Durdham Down, and it was arranged by the royalists, who could reckon on as many as 2,000 men, that on the appointed night the disaffected officers, who would then be in command of the main guard at the guard-house in Wine Street, should seize on the guard at Frome Gate. When this was done, a signal was to be given by the tolling of a bell in three churches—St. Nicholas's bell for the

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PLAN
showing
THE LINES FOR THE DEFENCE
OF
BRISTOL
1643-5
Ashley hill
farm house
thick hedge
COL RAINSBOROUGH'S BRIGADE
PRIORS HILL FORT
XIII
COLHAM
Gallows
VII
COULSTONS FORT & Redoubt
REG OF HORSE
REG OF FOOT
Kings Down
Stokes Croft
Post house
Sallyport
Windmill fort after
ROYAL FORT
XXII
REG OF BRERETONS HORSE
REG OF BRANDONS HORSE
Washingtons breach
ESSEX FORT?
Mount Zion
River Frome
COL MONTAGUE'S BRIGADE
XVI
NEWGATE
LAWFORDS GATE
OLD MARKET
GUARD HOUSE
BRANDON HILL FORT
VI
College Green
WATER FORT
VII
Cathedral
RIVER FROME
TOWER HARROD
Marsh
Canons' Marsh
BATTERY
XV
RED CLIFF GATE
RIVER AVON
Redoubt
Church
XIV
TEMPLE GATE
Redcliff meads
COL WELDONS BRIGADE
Bedminster
Pylle hill
Ancient defences so
new works
The Roman numerals give the number of the Ordnance mounted at the various points
The disposition of the troops in the storming of Bristol by Gen. Fairfax 3 Sept 1645 also indicated.
500
1 mile 100 yds

craftsmen, St. John's for the seamen, and St. Michael's for Rupert's cavaliers. All was ready, and about sixty of the party were assembled at Boucher's house, in Christmas Street, when the plot was discovered. Some of the royalists dropped into the Frome and escaped in boats, the rest were made prisoners. Another party was seized in Yeomans' house in Wine Street. The prisoners were treated with great inhumanity, and Fiennes violated the law by bringing Boucher and Yeomans before a court-martial, which condemned them to death as traitors. In spite of the efforts the king made to save them, and of the remonstrances of the mayor and other chief men on the rebel side in the city, they were hanged opposite Yeomans' house. Yeomans left eight little children, and his wife was again about to become a mother; Boucher's wife was left with seven. They died as became loyal and Christian gentlemen. Their last moments were troubled by the insults of the Roundhead officers; they asked in vain for the ministrations of royalist divines, and their prayers were interrupted by the revilings of a Separatist preacher. In after days, when Fiennes himself was tried on a capital charge, Prynne, the great lawyer of the parliamentary party, charged him with putting these men to death illegally.

Fiennes drew a line of fortifications outside the city on the north of the Avon, of about five miles in circuit, the Redcliff district which was not commanded being sufficiently defended by its own wall, which ran from Tower Harratz, near the present railway station, to the angle formed by the southward and westward reaches of the river. A curtain ran from the Avon to the Water

fort behind Limekiln Lane, and thence a double ditch and rampart were drawn to a strong fort on Brandon Hill. Thence the line passed down across Bullock's Park (now Berkeley Square), then a wild common, across the present road beyond the top of Park Row, where there was a small fort called Essex fort, to the Windmill (afterwards the Royal) fort on St. Michael's Hill; in this part, however, the defences were weak, for the ground was rocky. A small redoubt stood behind the Montague, the famous turtle house on Kingsdown, and thence the line advanced to Prior's Hill fort, which stood at the apex of the quadrilateral, on Nine Tree Hill. At this point the line turned to the south-east, passed down Hillgrove Street, across Stokes Croft, where a gate opened on the road to Gloucester, along the west of Portland Square, and so to a sallyport on the Frome, the space thence to the Avon being defended by a wall and ditch, and a fort at Lawford's Gate. Bristol was well worth defending, for its geographical position gave it a special importance in this war. It commanded the Severn as far as Gloucester, it controlled the action of the Royalists of Wales, and, as long as it was held by the Parliament, hindered the king from obtaining levies from that country; it was the place of transport for Ireland, and afforded the means of sending relief to the Protestants there, and of preventing the landing of Irish troops for service in the West; and, besides, in the hands of the king its intercourse with foreign lands offered an opportunity of procuring arms more cheaply than Charles could do from the Low Countries, for the merchants would accept trade privileges as readily as cash in payment for them. Nevertheless the city was

insecure; it lay in a hole, and if once the outer line of defences was pierced, it could offer no resistance.

During the early summer of 1643 the king's affairs prospered in the West. The Cornish army under the gallant Sir Ralph Hopton having taken Taunton, Bridgwater, and Dunster, was reinforced and overthrew Sir William Waller on Roundaway Down under Lord Wilmot. This victory made an attempt on Bristol possible, and Prince Rupert joined the army with a force from Oxford. On Sunday, July 23, Rupert took up his position by Clifton Church, while Lord Hertford and Prince Maurice invested the city on the Somerset side. During the next two days some ineffectual assaults were made, and the shipping in Kingroad declared for the king. On Wednesday, according to a preconcerted plan, the fortifications were attacked at six places. Eager to be first, the Cornishmen attempted to storm Redcliff before 3 A.M., and were beaten back with heavy loss. Some attacks on the Gloucestershire side also failed. Lord Grandison, one of the noblest of the king's party, and Colonel Lunsford, made a desperate assault on Prior's Hill fort, which was held by Blake, known in later days as the hero of our naval warfare. The royalists had neither ladders nor faggots in readiness, and they tried in vain to storm the fort without them. Twice they gave way, and as Grandison led them to a third attack, some Bristol men came up and engaged them in the ditch. Grandison fell mortally wounded, and his men were again repulsed. Meanwhile, the fortune of the day was turned by Colonel Washington, first cousin of the grandfather of the hero of American Independence. In command of three

hundred men, he had been set to guard some stores that were housed where Berkeley Place now stands. He had marked the weak place in the defences, the hollow between Brandon Hill and Prior's Hill fort. Essex fort, which should have guarded this part of the line, was perhaps unfinished; Fiennes had left it without guns, and had given it in charge to Langrish, a man of no courage or capacity. Here Washington led his men to the assault, their fire-pikes blazing as they came. Langrish's troop was thrown into confusion by the 'wild-fire' on the royalists' pikes, and galloped off without offering any resistance. The cavaliers 'made all plain' for their horse to enter, and then occupied the fort commanding the road now called Park Row. Here they waited in some danger for reinforcements. At last their success became known outside the line, and the cavalry came up and dashed through the breach they had made. Some of the royalists occupied College Green, manned the cathedral, St. Augustine's, and St. Mark's chapel; Bellasis and Lunsford made for Frome Gate, fighting in the narrow streets, and fired on from the windows of the houses. From one of these Harry Lunsford was shot at the top of Christmas Steps, long called 'Lunsford Stairs.' Fiennes evidently considered his position hopeless, and made no further effort. Not so the women of Bristol; for Mrs. Hazard and some two hundred more, with the help of a few men, barricaded Frome Gate with earth and woolsacks, and then went to the governor and entreated him to hold the city, vowing that they would take their children in their arms, and stand before the enemy's guns, 'to dead and keep off the shot from the soldiers if they were

afraid.' Fiennes would not listen to them; he had already attempted to treat, and now, finding that the royalists were about to wade across the Frome, for the tide was out, he renewed his offers. Rupert gladly accepted his surrender, and the next morning the Roundhead army evacuated Bristol. There was some plundering when the Cavaliers entered, for several of Fiennes' men joined the victorious army, and pointed out the houses of the most disaffected to their new comrades. The shops and houses on the bridge suffered most, for the inhabitants were suspected of special hatred to the king's cause.

Fiennes was tried by a council of war, Prynne and Walker, a gentleman of Somerset, exhibiting articles against him. He was found not to have defended the city as he ought, and was sentenced to death. Lord Essex pardoned him, and though he was not again employed as a soldier, Cromwell and Fairfax held that he was not to blame for the surrender. He seems to have been guilty of a serious error of judgment in not taking more effectual means to defend what was obviously the weakest place in the external fortifications, and Langrish certainly cannot be acquitted of cowardice. But when once the line was pierced, the city became untenable, and it was the duty of the governor to offer terms. Unfortunately for his reputation, he was evidently flurried, and neglected to inform Captain Blake, who held Prior's Hill fort, and Captain Husbands, who held the fort on Brandon Hill, of the surrender. They accordingly continued their resistance, and Rupert is said to have threatened to hang Blake for doing so. Like many other officers of the parliamentary army

at this time, Fiennes was not a soldier. Cromwell saw the mistake of employing such officers, and introduced a new system, to the ruin of the royal cause. The surrender of Bristol, 'the magazine of the West,' was 'a full tide of prosperity to the king.' At the same time the victory cost him dear; about five hundred 'tried and incomparable foot' fell in the various assaults, besides a large number of the best royalist officers, and chief among them Viscount Grandison, a loss, Clarendon says, that could 'never be enough lamented.'

Shortly after Bristol was won, the king paid a short visit to the city and appointed Rupert governor, and Lord (Sir Ralph) Hopton as his lieutenant, for the prince was generally engaged elsewhere. The surrender, which 'struck the two Houses to the heart,' had some noteworthy effects. It led the king to attack Gloucester, and had he gained that city, he would have had command of the Severn, he would have been able to supply his garrisons at Worcester and Shrewsbury from Bristol, and would have opened inland trade to the Bristol merchants, and so would have put the city in a position to supply him with large sums. The siege failed, and the failure was disastrous to his cause. During its course, and later, he was well supplied with levies from South Wales, which was now freed from the threatening neighbourhood of a parliamentary force in our city. And the possession of Bristol, now, as always, closely connected with Irish affairs, enabled him to receive recruits from the Irish army, who landed here in considerable numbers during 1643, for in that year he made a truce with the rebels in Ireland. After the second battle of Newbury and the failure of the nego-

tiations at Uxbridge, some thoughts were entertained of removing the Court hither, and though the plan was dropped, the Prince of Wales was sent here as a place of safety and as a centre for operations in the West. Soon after the Prince's arrival Waller was found to be trafficking with some of the inhabitants for a surprise of the city; two or three of his correspondents escaped, and the rest 'consented to anything that was proposed.' The command of the wealth of Bristol was not the least of the advantages the king gained by the surrender: the city was heavily taxed, and the two years that the royalists held it brought it almost to ruin. The triumph of the king's arms was followed by the restoration of the dispossessed clergy: many of the Separatists withdrew to London, and those who remained seem to have fared badly. During 1644 the royal cause declined. In the June of the next year the battle of Naseby left the king no part of England save the West, and set Fairfax and Cromwell at liberty to carry on the war there. In July Somerset was regained for the Parliament, and it was determined to attempt Bristol. The plan was not resolved on without much hesitation, for the plague had broken out in the city for the second time since 1603, and men were dying at the rate of a hundred a week.

When Rupert heard that the city was to be besieged, he returned to his post as governor. The fortifications had been strengthened, guns were mounted in the forts, Windmill Hill fort was rebuilt as the Royal fort, and a large supply of provisions was brought in. On the approach of the parliamentary army, the prince burnt Clifton and Bedminster, so that the enemy might not

find shelter, a matter of special importance, as the weather was extremely wet, and this cost the besiegers the loss of many men and horses. Further destruction was stopped by a flying column; the burning of Temple Street in the city was perhaps an accident, and may have taken place later. Fairfax appeared before Bristol on August 21, and after he had invested it, he made his head-quarters opposite Prior's Hill fort, which he saw was the key of the position. Considerable hope appears to have been entertained that the city would have been delivered by the inhabitants, but their 'good affection to us,' Cromwell writes, 'did not answer expectation;' the prince, indeed, took measures to prevent any such attempt. Up to September 2 Rupert made constant sallies on the besiegers' works without any great loss on either side. Meanwhile, the capture of the fort on Portishead Point enabled Admiral Moulton to hold the river for the Parliament and to bring his sailors to help Fairfax, who was also joined by the force of 2,000 countrymen who had taken the fort. It was now determined to storm the city. Before taking this step Fairfax sent the prince a letter urging him to surrender, and reminding him how his family had ever 'had the prayers, tears, purses, and blood of the Parliament and people.' Rupert asked for time to consult the king. This was refused, and on September 7 he demanded terms which the general would not grant. On September 10, at 2 A.M., Fairfax gave the signal for the storm, and several portions of the line were attacked at once. Colonel Montague stormed the double work at Lawford's Gate, made a way for Desborough's horse to follow him, occupied the ground between the rivers, and

took possession of the Castle Gate. At Prior's Hill fort, Rainsborough's brigade, the pick of the army, had a desperate struggle to gain the parapet, and then for two hours more were at push of pike until Hammond, who had forced an entrance by Stokes Croft, attacked the inward side of the fort. Then the royalists in the fort asked quarter, but almost all were put to the sword. The attack on Redcliff, like the royalists' attack of two years before, was unsuccessful, for the walls were too high for the besiegers' ladders, and the cannon were well served. About four hours after Prior's Hill fort had been taken Rupert sent to demand a parley. Fairfax granted it on condition that the garrison put out the fires that were now raging in three places in the city, and the surrender was arranged in the evening. The conduct of Rupert justifies the surrender of Fiennes; for the prince, though he had not the good will of the citizens, had a larger garrison. He found that the place was untenable, and was anxious to treat before the city was stormed. It may be that the considerations that Fairfax had urged in his letter had some weight with him, and it may be that he was influenced by the belief that his uncle's cause was already hopeless. Neither of these suppositions, however, is wanted to explain his conduct. That the position was untenable was sufficient reason for him as a soldier to demand terms, and when the enemy had gained a decided advantage, to accept less favourable conditions than he had at first proposed. Charles was very angry and reproached him bitterly. When Fairfax and Cromwell entered the city, they found it in such a wretched state that one cannot wonder that the plague found many victims: it looked 'more

like a prison,' Sprigg says, 'than a city, and the people more like prisoners than citizens; being brought so low with taxations, so poor in habit, and so dejected in countenance; the streets so noisome, and the houses so nasty, as that they were unfit to receive friends or freemen till they were cleansed.'

The recovery of Bristol by the Puritans was followed by the dispossession of the royalist clergy. The lead was torn from the roof of the palace, even while the wife of Howel, the bishop, lay there in child-bed, and the building was turned into a malt-house. At Christ Church a tailor took the place of the learned vicar Standfast, who was imprisoned for loyalty, and changes of a like kind took place in other churches. The Separatists returned from London, but their period of triumph was marred, so their chronicler, Terrell, the author of the 'Broadmead Records,' tells us, by internal feuds; every meeting almost was filled with disputes and debates. After 1653 a separation gradually grew up on the subject of baptism, and the new secession has left its mark in the name Baptist Mills, where a wholesale immersion took place in the Frome in January 1667—an occasion marked, it was believed, by a miracle; for none of the dipped took cold. Great as the hatred was between the Presbyterians and the other sectaries, all felt equal bitterness against the Quakers, who certainly behaved in a very unpleasant manner, interrupting the preachers in their sermons, and breaking into prayer-meetings with the unflattering declaration, 'The prayer of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.' A once famous controversy was carried on in Bristol between them and their chief opponents, the Baptists, and the

magistrates did their best to suppress them by the more cogent arguments of imprisonment and whipping. Intolerance towards any sect of Protestant nonconformists was grievous to Cromwell, and the question was one of the chief points of difference between him and his second Parliament. These differences came to a head about the case of James Naylor, a crazy Quaker, who, in 1655, entered Bristol amidst the Hosannahs of a few mud-bespattered worshippers. After much debating, the Parliament condemned the poor wretch to a punishment of revolting cruelty, to various whippings, branding, and such like, which he underwent partly here and partly in London. Were there then to be no limits between the spheres of Parliament and the law-courts? Was Parliament to condemn whom it would, to any punishment it thought good? If so, what place was left for the Protector? Cromwell answered these questions by a new settlement of the nation, which gave him the control of Parliament. After the Restoration the nonconformists of Bristol were violently persecuted, their meetings for worship were broken up, they were fined, imprisoned, and even transported to Barbados by the magistrates to work in their plantations.

Changes in the governing body of the city followed each surrender. Certain aldermen had been put out of office by the royalists, and when Bristol fell into the hands of the rebels, the republicans in their turn naturally refused to allow their enemies to bear rule in a place of such importance. Skippon, the governor, deposed the mayor, made the council elect his nominee, put out the royalist aldermen, and reinstated those whom the royalists had deprived. Now, as at other times, we find

an illustration of the importance of the city in connexion with Ireland; for Cromwell came here on July 14, 1649, and stayed about a fortnight making preparations for his famous Irish expedition. He came in great state, with the six Flanders mares he loved to drive, and was received by the citizens with much joy. Two years later, a traveller of more illustrious descent visited the city in humbler guise. Charles II., after his defeat at Worcester, rode through Bristol with Mistress Lane on a pillion behind him, on his way to Mr. Norton's house at Abbot's Leigh, where he found shelter for some days. Little chance there seemed then that he would ever sit upon his father's throne. Some old things had passed away for ever, and the change in the national history was reflected in Bristol by the demolition of the castle, in its strength, its decay, and its destruction, an emblem of a system that had now become unsuited to the requirements of the nation. Nobler things than the relics of this worn-out system seemed also to have perished. But though our constitutional life was interrupted it was soon to be restored again. Here as elsewhere men wearied of Puritan tyranny. The return of the Rump Parliament threatened to perpetuate the republican form of government, and the 'prentices of Bristol, like their fellows in London, and indeed throughout the country, rose for 'a free Parliament,' and 'would let none of the trained bands mount guard but those that would declare with them.' They set at nought the authority of the mayor, and showed their contempt for him, and their hatred of Puritan restrictions, by returning to their old cruel pastimes, squailing a goose before his door, and tossing dogs and cats on Shrove Tuesday. Order was

at length enforced by the arrival of a body of troops. Some royalist merchants appear to have encouraged these disturbances, and after the Restoration one, at least, boasted that he had done so.

The party struggles of the nation during the reigns of the last two kings of the house of Stuart are to some extent reflected in what we know of Bristol at the same period. It was a time of wonderful prosperity, for the trade of the city with the West Indies and with Spain was now fully established. Bristol, in Evelyn's eyes, vied with London, 'not for its large extent, but manner of building, shops, bridge, traffic, exchange, market-place, &c.' Another visitor, dearer to us than sedate Evelyn, tells us something about Bristol at this time. Samuel Pepys, clerk of the Acts of the Navy, came here in 1668, with his wife, her pretty maid Deb. Willet, and others. They only spent one day here, but Pepys's record of it is surely worth as much as stories of the storming of forts or harrying of Baptists; for it tells us how, even in his experienced eyes, the Bristol quay seemed 'a most large and noble place,' how a fine new ship was building there for the king's service, and mischievous fellows who pretended to know the secrets of our Bristol households vowed she ought to be manned by the husbands of wives who were masters and mistresses both; how Deb's uncle, 'a sober merchant and very good company,' was like a wealthy London merchant, yet, I think, no man of mark in Bristol; how he took Pepys home to feast on strawberries, a whole venison pasty, and 'plenty of brave wine, and above all Bristol milk;' and afterwards showed him where the merchants met, and the High Cross yet standing, 'like Cheapside;' and how as they

walked the streets, where Pepys marvelled to see no carts, save such as were drawn by dogs, for fear of shaking the vaults where the city's wealth was stored, all paid his companion great respect, 'and he the like to the meanest'—such were Bristol manners—and so, to the 'Horseshoe' in Wine Street. Yet Deb's uncle, though he was so well respected, was a small man by the side of the wealthy St. Kitts' merchants, or Meire merchants as they were called.

The special sight to be seen in the city was the refining of sugar and casting it into loaves, and visitors to the refineries used to have a collation of eggs fried in the furnace, and Spanish wine. A finer sight, however, it must have been to see the West Indiamen that filled the docks in those halcyon days, when the market was not spoilt by cheap foreign sugars, that have ruined the finest trade Bristol ever had, while they disappoint the hopes of the ignorant purchaser. The inhabitants loved to walk among the rows of trees that stood on the end of the square peninsula, now covered by Queen Square and the adjoining streets, and see the ships sail in and out of the harbours on either side, and mark the bustle of the yards, where men of war and privateers, ocean-going merchant ships, and vessels for the Irish and coasting trades were in building, along with others to be used in that traffic in men which directly or indirectly brought so much gain to the city. The merchants were courted by the king. At one time there were two baronets and twelve knights in the council, and knighthood then meant more than it does now. They were probably for the most part an ignorant set of men, and Pepys's story of the mayor who was seen

to read a pass upside down is not wholly improbable. 'Full of trade and knighthood,' to quote the words of a recorder of this period, the council was also full of jealousies, and its members quarrelled incessantly.

One of these merchants, Sir John Knight, though he had once been a Presbyterian, was distinguished for the bitterness with which he persecuted the nonconformists. He was for many years a member for the city, and took an active part in investigating the so-called Popish plot. The affair created special excitement in Bristol, for Bedloe the informer persuaded the mayor, a pompous Welshman, to believe his story, and so was sent up to London. Knight brought an accusation in the House of Commons against Sir Robert Cann, also a merchant and a member for the city, declaring that he had said 'that there was no popish plot but a Presbyterian plot,' and the charge was supported by Row, the sword-bearer, an official whom Roger North declares the Bristol merchants used to call '*sorberer*.' Although Cann when mayor had behaved generously to the nonconformists, and had defeated the spies who gave him information about conventicles by sending messengers to let the congregation know that he was coming, he was a high Tory, and this accusation seems to have been brought against him in order to ruin the Tory party in the council. When he was called to account in the House, the choleric old man, provoked beyond endurance, roundly abused his accusers, declaring that Row was a 'damned rogue,' and the Commons, unable to discern the truth of this description, expelled him and committed him to the Tower until he apologised. While Cann and several more were staunch 'abhorrers,' as

the Tories were then called, Knight, in spite of his persecuting zeal, joined the 'petitioners,' or Whigs, and this party was strong in the council, for Bristol was vehemently Protestant. In the next reign the mob, encouraged by some of the merchants, showed their dislike to the king's religious innovations by a profane pageant; a riot followed, the soldiers were called out, and several were seriously hurt. For years Charles II. maintained with consummate skill what for a time appeared to be a hopeless struggle with the Whigs. At last his day of triumph came, and in desperation the less scrupulous Whigs engaged in a number of dark and wild conspiracies. Risings were arranged to take place in London, Bristol, and elsewhere, and the king and the Duke of York were to be slain. These designs were confused by the Government with the plans of the leaders of the Whig party. Of the Bristol men who were engaged in these bloodthirsty plots, Row, the sword-bearer, and a lawyer named Wade were pardoned. Holloway, a linen manufacturer, fled to the West Indies, was brought back and hanged, his head and quarters being sent to Bristol.

The chief strength of the Whigs lay in the towns, the old abodes of Puritanism, and the king, in order to complete his victory, took measures to make the corporations dependent on himself. On the ground of certain actual and alleged irregularities, he compelled the towns to surrender their charters. A writ of *Quo warranto*, demanding by what right the city claimed to be a corporation, was brought to Bristol on February 12, 1683. Some trivial breaches of the charters had certainly been committed, but the contention of the

Crown that a city or town had no corporate existence except it could show a charter of incorporation was utterly illegal. The Bristol burgesses had, as we have seen, from very early times corporate succession and a common seal, their town had been created a county and a city, and they had corporate rights and duties. A royal charter might acknowledge, it could not create, the corporation of Bristol, for it was already in existence. The charters, however, were surrendered, and the next year a new charter was granted which incorporated the city, confirmed the constitution of the court of aldermen and the common council, nominated all the officers of the new corporation, and declared the right of the Crown to remove them at pleasure. The Whigs were crushed, and the government of the city was made subject to the arbitrary will of the Crown. James II. took advantage of his brother's victory. His Declaration of Indulgence offended the Tory churchmen, and he looked to the Dissenters to support his unconstitutional action, hoping that they would be willing to see the Roman Catholic religion tolerated for the sake of the relief they would themselves gain. He therefore turned out the Tory members of the corporation, and supplied their places with Whigs and Dissenters. At Bristol the 'corporation purge' was effected in February 1688. Thanks to Halifax, the king found himself mistaken, and tried, though too late, to retrace his steps. The following October he turned out his new chamber and allowed the elections to be made on the old charters.

As might be expected from the Whiggish and Presbyterian leanings of a large part of the citizens, the Duke of Monmouth had friends in Bristol, and the Duke

of Beaufort, who occupied the city in 1685, considered that there was some danger of sedition. Monmouth marched as far as Pensford, five miles from Bristol, and his approach caused wild excitement; the streets that night were filled with people, and shouts of 'A Monmouth! a Monmouth! The Protestant religion!' were raised in the darkness. Beaufort declared that he would burn the city rather than let it fall into Monmouth's hands. Suddenly flames appeared at the quay, where the 'William and Mary' had been fired either by accident or by the friends of the rebels. The prompt measures taken by Beaufort saved the city, and Monmouth, after advancing to Keynsham, in the hope of making an attack on the Gloucestershire side, turned towards Bath. Sixty persons were seized in Bristol. When Jeffreys held the assize at which he gave the magistrates such a rating for their kidnapping practices, six were convicted of high treason and three of them were executed. Wade, who had again been active in treason, saved his life by turning informer; he had considerable property in the city, and the remembrance of his treasons is still preserved there in the name Traitor's Bridge given to the bridge he built over the Frome near Wade Street. In common with the people at large, the citizens were turned against the king by his assaults on their religion, and their feelings were shown by the delight with which they received the news of the acquittal of their bishop, Sir Jonathan Trelawney, and his brethren; all day the bells rang from the crowd of steeples that adorned the city and all night huge bonfires blazed in the streets. When the Prince of Orange was on the march to Salisbury, Bristol opened her gates to his troops, and Beaufort left in haste, 'not staying to dine.'

CHAPTER VIII.

ODDS AND ENDS.

Edward Colston—Trade in the eighteenth century—Privateers—Extent and aspect of the city—Manners and the drama—Newspapers—The Hotwells and Clifton—Methodism—Literary awakening, Chatterton, Southey, and Coleridge.

EVERY year Bristol keeps the 'day' of one of her citizens who may almost be said to have a kind of local saintship, and the honour paid to the memory of Edward Colston is as worthily bestowed as it is nobly expressed. Of the events of his life we know little, for the stories told about him generally rest on doubtful authority. His benevolence does not need the feeble illustration they are meant to afford, and other traits of his character are sufficiently indicated by the few letters of his that have been preserved. The eldest son of William Colston, an alderman who was turned out of his office by Skippon for loyalty to the king, he was a Tory and a churchman of the highest order. Perhaps this was the cause why he resided chiefly at Mortlake, instead of at Bristol, where the Whigs were strong, though, as he did not take up his freedom as a burgess and a 'Meire merchant' until 1683, when he was forty-seven, his trade probably was chiefly carried on in London, where he had received his education as

a scholar of Christ's Hospital. About that time, however, he seems to have lived for some time here; the site of his house in Small Street is now occupied by the Assize Courts; he was a Merchant Venturer, and took part in the business of the hall. Although he gave liberally in London, his chief pleasure was to do good in his native city. His earliest benefactions in Bristol were the building of the almshouse on St. Michael's Hill, and the provision he made for sailors in the Merchants' Almshouse in King Street. He had the warmest sympathy with a work in which the Church largely engaged at this period, the education of the poor, and was a member of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. Accordingly, his greatest works were the foundation of the Charity School in Temple Street, and of the noble school, called after him, which was first established on St. Augustine's Back, and which has of late years been removed to Stapleton. His various charities, mostly given in his lifetime, amounted to 70,695*l.*; he lived simply and died very rich. The corporation refused his offer to enlarge Queen Elizabeth's Hospital, which was under their management; some of them could not even write their names, and they held 'gifts of that nature only a nursery for beggars and sloths, and rather a burthen than a benefit to the place where they are bestowed.' He therefore built 'Colston's School,' and put it under the government of the Merchant Venturers. He was not without honour in his own city. The nation, already weary of the long war of the Spanish Succession, was violently excited by the prosecution of Dr. Sacheverell by the Whig government. The Tories raised the cry of the 'Church in danger;' the

ministers were dismissed, and the general election which followed, gave the Tories a majority in the Commons. At this election of 1710 Colston was returned for Bristol, and 'a mitre and streamers' were carried in triumph at the declaration of the poll.

In party spirit Colston was a man of his own time. When he broke with the vicar of Temple, whom he had deeply obliged, because he sided with the enemies of the Church, he did exactly as every man of either side would have done. In tenderness of heart there were few like him. Just and exact in all things, and demanding that all should render him his due, he was thoughtful for others, not giving his alms carelessly, but anxiously seeking to relieve the sick and those who, through no fault of their own, had been reduced to want. For his boys he must have good air, and a 'court assigned for them to play in;' he wished to make them useful citizens, and so would have them 'educated in the fear of God and the profession of His true religion,' and, not living when men fancy it possible to separate religion from dogma, added, 'as it is set forth by the Established Church of England.' No books were to be used in his school with 'any tincture of Whiggism.' Among the Merchant Venturers he found men of a like spirit. In a letter, honourable alike to the writer and receiver, Sir John Duddlestone gives him a report of a visit paid to Temple School; 'it did his heart good to see and hear those fatherless and friendless children to spell, read, write, cypher, respond to the catechism, say graces, prayers, and several verses in Scripture'—they sang four psalms, and 'go on very cheerful with their arithmetic,' some even 'into the square and cube root.'

'God Almighty prosper you,' prays the worthy tobacco merchant, and the spirit of his letter is still alive in Bristol. Colston died in 1721, and every year his birthday is kept in his native city by large collections for the poor, and in some cases by attendance at the worship he loved so well, along, too, with much feasting and political speech-making, not always of a sort he would have sat still to hear. No other city in the kingdom has an institution of exactly the same character as 'Colston's Day,' and until quite lately some of the speeches delivered at the political dinners held on this anniversary were second only in importance to those made at the banquet given by the Lord Mayor of London on November 9.

In order to illustrate the position of the merchants something has been said of the prosperity of Bristol in the last chapter. By the beginning of the eighteenth century the old cloth manufacture of the city had fallen into some decay. This appears to have been caused chiefly by external competition, for when Ireland was settled, the Protestant colonists introduced the manufacture of drapery. This stopped the supply of wool from Ireland, on which the western clothiers depended, and, owing to the cheapness of food and lowness of wages, the Irish manufacturers were able in 1692 to undersell them by as much (if their complaints may be credited) as 20 per cent. To remedy this, the exportation of Irish draperies to foreign countries was heavily taxed, and the new industry was virtually ruined in Ireland—a measure cruelly unjust to the Protestant population, though it did not concern the country as a whole, for it did not apply to the more general manu-

facture of frieze. Nor did this taxation restore the prosperity of our clothiers; for the Irish manufacturers carried their industry to foreign countries, and so they were met by new and even more dangerous rivals.[1] Although this decline did not injure Bristol, where the extraordinarily profitable trade with the West Indies, America, and Spain rapidly absorbed all available capital, it nevertheless for a time produced considerable distress among the labouring class, and the mayor informed the Privy Council in 1709—a year of great scarcity—that several hundreds had 'lately become chargeable.' Among those out of work were many French refugees, who had come over on the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and the object of this letter was to show that it was unadvisable that more of them should settle here. Some of those who came, however, were of a higher class, and a list of twenty-seven who took the oath in that year shows, along with nine weavers, the names of ten merchants, a physician, and three surgeons. More Huguenots came in spite of the mayor's letter, and St. Mark's, the old chapel of the Bons Hommes, now the mayor's chapel, was assigned to them, until, in 1727, they built a church for themselves in the Hospital orchard. Although in less quantities, woollen goods were still made here, and there were, besides, manufactories of iron, tin, copper, and brass; the brass manufactory, started in 1705, was supplied with calamine from Durdham Down and the Somerset hills. Markets for all these productions were found in the western colonies and on the west coast of Africa.

[1] See an article on the 'Repression of the Irish Woollen Manufacture,' in the *English Historical Review* for April 1886.

Bristol trade was carried on in ships built in the port and manned from the city. The chief course of trade was the export of home productions to Africa, where they were used in the purchase of negroes. The value of each slave was expressed in bars of iron, the average price on the Calabar coast in 1727 being no more than about 17 bars at 3*s.* 3*d.* a bar. After it had got rid of its cargo of goods and taken in a human cargo, the ship sailed for the West Indies. The horrors of that passage need not be descanted on here: the hold was crammed to suffocation, and sickness and cruelty thinned the numbers during the voyage. Cheaply bought, a few slaves more or less at the end was no great matter, and no other consideration than money entered into the minds of the traders. At the West Indies the slaves were sold, and the ship returned laden with the produce of the islands and the American colonies, sugar, tobacco, indigo, cotton, and ginger, which were dispersed through the kingdom or exported to Ireland and foreign parts in Bristol ships. Defoe, in his *Tour through the Whole Island* (1725), observes that the merchants of Bristol 'trade with more independency upon London than any other town,' and that 'whatsoever exportations they make they bring back full return to their own port, and dispose of it there.' No cargo, he says, was too big for them; the shopkeepers were mostly wholesale men, and their inland trade was so large that they maintained their own carriers just as the London tradesmen did. They had a large trade with Wales, and their Irish trade had 'prodigiously increased' since the Revolution; in this, however, he notices that they had rivals, for they had now to contend with 'the

great increase and encroachment of the merchants at Liverpool.'

Bristol ships sailed on a large number of privateering expeditions, and throughout the whole of the century these voyages form a marked feature in the life of the city. The most famous among the earlier expeditions was the voyage of the 'Duke' and 'Duchess,' two ships fitted out by sixteen merchants, and placed under the command of Captain Woodes Rogers. With these Rogers left Kingroad on August 1, 1708, the 'Duke' carrying thirty, and the 'Duchess' twenty-six, guns, and the crews together numbering 333; the second captain of the 'Duke' was Dr. Dover, who became famous for his powders. Rogers sailed to Brazil, passed Cape Horn more to the south than had ever been done before, and, on January 31, 1709, found Alexander Selkirk on Juan Fernandez, and took him off. After capturing some prizes, our Bristol sailors stormed the Spanish town of Guayaquil, the chief port of the present Republic of Ecuador, and compelled the inhabitants to ransom themselves with 30,000 pieces of eight; then they put in at Tacames Bay, and sold the negroes they had taken out of a Spanish slaver, cruised off Cape S. Lucas, took a large Manilla ship and fought desperately, though unsuccessfully, with another. On New Year's day, 1710, the ships set out for the voyage across the Pacific, and anchored at Guam about two months later. They rounded the Cape, completed their voyage round the world, and brought back, it is said, no less than 170,000*l.* On his return Rogers wrote the story of his voyage, which is well worth reading. Our Bristol historians will have us believe that Defoe

met Selkirk in their city, and that he wrote 'Robinson Crusoe' from Selkirk's papers. As Defoe was in hiding from bailiffs when he was here, and so used, we are told, to be called 'the Sunday gentleman,' his visit must probably be dated about 1692, the year of his bankruptcy, and though, of course, he founded his famous story on Selkirk's adventures, the assertion that he owed anything further to him rests on mere hearsay evidence and may safely be rejected. Rogers's success led to a great increase in privateering, which for some years seems to have occupied no small part of the energies of the city.[1]

Bristol took a prominent part in the demand for war excited in 1738–9 by the conduct of the Spanish guarda-costas, who searched our ships and ill-treated our seamen in American waters. Walpole was forced to yield to the will of the nation. War was declared against Spain, and was soon merged in the greater contest of the Austrian Succession, during which Bristol ships gained some brilliant victories over both the Spanish and the French. Privateering rose to its highest pitch here during the Seven Years' War, when as many as fifty-one Bristol ships, carrying 1,004 guns, were engaged in various attempts, for the most part to the loss of their owners, to take French ships conveying supplies to Canada. Several ships also sailed from Bristol with letters of marque during our war with the American colonies, some prizes were taken,

[1] Once or twice these expeditions ended in mutiny and piracy. No better picture of a bit of Bristol life during the privateering times can well be found than that Mr. R. L. Stevenson has given in *Treasure Island*.

and some gallant deeds were done in battle with the French.

A hundred and fifty years ago Bristol was a small, dirty, and densely populated city. Here is part of Pope's description of it in 1735:—'You come first to old walls and over a bridge, built on both sides, like London Bridge, and as much crowded with a strange mixture of seamen, women, children, loaded horses, asses and sledges, with goods, dragging along together without posts to separate them. From thence you come to a quay along the old wall with houses on both sides, and in the middle of the street, as far as you can see, hundreds of ships, their masts as thick as they can stand by one another, which is the oddest and most surprising sight imaginable. . . . The city is very unpleasant, and no civilised company in it.' The poet, it should be noted, refused to be made acquainted with the merchants, of whom he had heard a bad character. 'The streets are as crowded as London, but the best image I can give you of it is, 'tis as if Wapping and Southwark were ten times as big, or all their people ran into London.' The only part he admired was 'the Square:' this was Queen Square, which, with the neighbouring streets, now occupied the end of the peninsula between the two rivers. It was begun in Anne's reign, and was named after her, for she visited the city in 1702, and eight years afterwards granted the charter by which it was governed until 1835. The Bristol that Pope saw contained about 80,000 inhabitants tightly packed together; for, as the corporation shut out every one from trading except freemen, the city, Defoe remarks, did not spread and was closely built.

The streets were poor and narrow. When Pepys visited Bristol no carts, as we have seen, were used, save such as were drawn by dogs, for fear of crushing the vaults under the streets; and in Defoe's time all heavy goods were drawn on sledges, which the people called 'gee-hoes'—this, he says, 'kills a great multitude of horses, and the pavement is worn so smooth by them that in wet weather the streets are slippery.' This barbarous custom of drawing loads without wheels did not entirely go out until the beginning of the present century.

In 1735 Redcliff Hill was covered with houses, but Redcliff and Temple Meads still deserved their name. On the south of Newfoundland Lane meadow land stretched down to the Frome, while on the other side gardens and meadows filled all the space as far as Stokes Croft. Kingsdown Parade marks the northern boundary of the houses, which did not extend higher up St. Michael's Hill than Southwell Street. Beyond that point the road led to the gallows, which stood at the meeting of the ways on the top of the hill. Westwards to Brandon Hill there were but few houses, and Washington's Breach, as Park Row was still called, ran through gardens and open ground. Below the hill, Bullock's Park was not covered by Berkeley Square until the end of the century. Beyond it on the south, the upper end of College Green abutted on the Bishop's Park, and between the park and the river Canons' Marsh still lay unoccupied. College Green was the most fashionable part of Bristol until it was supplanted by Queen Square. Great changes have been made in the parts of the city that were inhabited in Pope's time. For example, the old bridge, with its narrow street of

overhanging houses, was pulled down and a new one built in 1767. From the bridge the entrance to the city lay under St. Nicholas' Gate, on which stood the chancel of the church, and here the lower part of High Street was steep and dangerous. At the end of Corn Street there still stood the gate below the Tower of St. Leonard's, and as yet there was no Clare Street. The gates were demolished one by one early in the reign of George III. When Pope was here, the High Cross had lately been removed from its place and set up in College Green, and before many years it was pulled down and its fragments were taken to Stourhead.

The change in manners has been at least as great as in the outward aspect of the city. Here as elsewhere in old days punishments were cruel, and gratified the brutality of the rabble. Women were frequently ducked for scolding by order of the mayor: the ducking-stool was on the weir, and the victim was often immersed three times—the last case happened, it is said, in 1718. Thieves, female as well as male, were whipped through the streets, naked to the waist, and persons of both sexes were condemned to be exposed on the pillory to the barbarous usage of the mob. The city was noted for the sumptuous feasts and excessive drinking of the rich, and for the fierce character of the lowest class. Cock-fighting and bull-baiting were of course favourite amusements, the bull-ring occupying the site of the modern church of St. Jude. The puritan spirit of the magistrates showed itself both in the strictness with which the observance of Sunday was enforced, 'a great face of seriousness and religion' appearing in the city on that day, and in the repression of the drama. After

the Restoration, three or four buildings seem to have been used as theatres, until in 1704, in accordance with a presentment of the grand jury, of which Stephen Peloquin, a leading Huguenot refugee was a member, all play-acting was forbidden within the city, and the theatre in Tucker Street was closed and sold for a Presbyterian meeting-house. Five years later an order was made to drive out all players and other roving people. Happily the limits of the magistrates' jurisdiction were narrow, and Bristol people were soon taught that there were better sights to be seen than the ducking of women, and better amusements than fuddling; for before 1726 that admirable comedian Hippisley, the original 'Peachem' in the 'Beggar's Opera,' opened a theatre at Jacob's Wells at the foot of Brandon Hill, just outside the bounds, and a company performed there during the summer season. Dark nights were the great drawback; for the only lights in the streets were candles in lanterns, which, in accordance with an order of 1660, the wealthier citizens were obliged to hang on their houses from six to nine P.M., when decent people were supposed to go to bed. Hippisley accordingly used to state on his playbills that servants would be placed with lights on the road from the theatre to College Green. In 1764–6 Powell, an excellent actor, built the theatre in King Street, then the fashionable quarter—a step which excited so much indignation among the Quakers and Methodists that the performances of the opening night, two comedies, were announced as a 'Concert of Music and a specimen of Rhetoric.' Powell was popular here, and his bills used to contain a request that servants might be sent down at four, to keep places

for their masters and mistresses till the play began at seven. He was deservedly respected, and was buried with some state by the Dean in the cathedral church. The prices at the Jacob's Wells theatre varied from 3*s.* in the boxes to 1*s.* for the gallery, and in the King Street house from 4*s.* to 1*s.* 6*d.*

As Bristol was deeply interested in all that concerned trade, it was naturally one of the places in which the earliest country newspapers were published. Although we must not reckon as newspapers the migratory Mercuries of the Civil War time, it is interesting to find that one of them, entitled 'Mercurius Hibernicus,' was printed here in 1644. The first Bristol newspaper was the 'Post-boy,' a tiny paper filled with news of the war, which appeared in 1702. It lived until 1712, and the next year was succeeded by Samuel Farley's 'Postman,' afterwards published by Samuel and Felix Farley as the 'Bristol Journal.' Some years later Felix started a 'Journal' of his own, and in 1774 a secession from the office of Sarah Farley, Samuel's successor, led to the publication of a third 'Journal,' afterwards the 'Mirror.' These were Tory papers. 'Felix Farley's Journal,' which was published every Saturday at 6*d.*, has been combined with the 'Mirror,' and the two, together with a third paper of like politics, are incorporated in the 'Daily Bristol Times and Mirror,' which claims to represent Samuel Farley's old 'Journal,' and vigorously upholds the Tory cause. The 'Gazette,' a Whig paper, was started in 1767. By the end of the century there were five weekly newspapers published in Bristol.

A few dingy buildings are all that now remain to remind us of the time when the Hotwells was a fairly

fashionable health resort. The water, which William Wyrcestre says is 'as warm as milk, or as the Bath water,' was first largely used towards the end of the seventeenth century, about eighty years before Smollett immortalised it by bringing Matthew Bramble and his family to the 'Hotwell' on their famous tour. The Welsh squire, kindliest of all cynics, laughed at the boasted virtues of the water, and declared the place intolerable (as he declared all other places were, until he reached the author's native land) for 'the dirt, the stench, the chilling blasts, and the perpetual rains.' His sensitive niece Lyddy thought differently: to her the company seemed 'so good-natured, so free, so easy,' the water 'so clear, so pure, so mild, so charmingly mawkish.' In spite of its now forgotten look, the place had its season, pump-room, and band, its 'rooms' with balls and assemblies, and a Master of the Ceremonies, a colonnade, and a long parade shaded with trees, and gay parties used to go down the river in boats with music, or across the ferry to eat strawberries and cream at Ashton. Clifton, the parish to which the 'Hotwell' belongs, was then held to be 'a most elegant village,' and to bid fair 'to become a fine town'; for the Mall, Rodney Place, and the Royal York Crescent were built by 1797, and the building of the Lower Crescent was only stopped because the war made money scarce. One of the sights, at the entrance of the Down, was the house (Manilla Hall) of Sir William Draper (*d.* 1787), who conquered Manilla during the Seven Years' War, and returned home to wage an unequal strife with 'Junius.' Clifton too had its hot well, its saline spa, and its ballroom in Gloucester Place. It is evident,

however, that it was chiefly looked on as the place where the visitors to the more fashionable Hotwell could obtain airy lodgings. In 1793 the price of lodgings at Clifton or the Hotwell was 10*s.* a week for each room during the season, which lasted from Lady Day to Michaelmas, and half that sum out of season.

Bristol may be said to have been the cradle of Methodism, for there the most important events in the early history of the society took place, and nowhere else was the preaching of its apostles received with such instant enthusiasm as among its largely Celtic population. When Whitefield visited Bristol in 1739, he remembered the words of a friend who, seeking to dissuade him from his expedition to Savannah the year before, had said, 'If you have a mind to convert Indians, there are colliers enough at Kingswood,' and one Saturday afternoon preached from 'his first field-pulpit' at Rose Green. The Kingswood collieries, from which Bristol drew its chief supply of coal, were worked by a lawless race, which more than once endangered the peace of the city. Dwelling in a district of the out-parish of St. Philip and St. Jacob, and at a distance of three or four miles from the parish church, the colliers lived and died in a state of utter ignorance and brutality, and Whitefield showed no common courage in venturing among them, especially as field-preaching was then wholly unknown. His eloquence soon drew crowds round him, and before long at least ten thousand listened with rapt attention to his sermons. As he spoke, tears rolled down blackened cheeks, and hearts long grown hard were melted. Crowds of persons of all classes came out from Bristol to hear him; even the

trees and hedges were filled with listeners. Forbidden to preach in the churches of the city, he addressed large congregations at the Glass-house Yard and other places. He left his work to be carried on by Wesley. During the early years of Wesley's preaching the extraordinary excitement of his hearers broke out in various hysterical symptoms, which appear to have been more prevalent in Bristol than elsewhere. Here the first Methodist meeting-house was built in the Horsefair, the system of class meetings was first organised, and most of the events connected with the split between Wesley and the Calvinistic Methodists took place, and, lastly, it was by the Bristol Conference that Francis Asbury was sent to America, where he received the title of bishop, and founded the American Methodist Episcopal Church. In his later days Wesley often preached in the Bristol churches; some of the clergy adopted his views, and those who did so drew the largest congregations. While a strong party, especially among the younger men, ridiculed Methodism, it spread rapidly in the city, and by the end of the century the followers of Whitefield and Wesley had nine meeting-houses there, some of them large and all well attended.

Although one of her own poets has described Bristol as 'By trade and dulness consecrate to fame,' the city has a notable place in literary history. This is largely due to Thomas Chatterton (1752–1770), whose father, a schoolmaster and singing-man at the cathedral, died shortly before his son's birth. Chatterton was unfortunate in the persons amongst whom he lived. Burgum, the pewterer, with his craving for noble ancestry, Catcott, another pewterer, extraordinarily vain

and foolish, and Barrett, the surgeon, and an historian of the city, a small-hearted and credulous pedant, who all made use of the young poet, neither appreciated his powers nor dealt liberally with him. Chatterton's literary forgeries, a number of poems which he alleged were written by 'Rowley,' an imaginary chaplain of Canynges, and some of his contemporaries, together with other pseudo-antique matter manufactured for Barrett and Burgum, were committed under great temptation. The Rowley poems, which if published under his own name would have been disregarded by his fellow-citizens, gave him something of the fame he longed for, and a chance of deliverance from the degradation and drudgery which oppressed the sensitive lad while in the service of the suspicious attorney Lambert. It is unlikely that he deliberately intended to carry out his imposture to the extent it at last reached, and probably at first he was simply guilty of a comparatively harmless trick to excite attention. Small, however, as the money was that he received from Burgum and Barrett for the work with which he satisfied their pride and deceived their ignorance, that, and the measure of fame that came to him, tempted him to carry on his pretended discoveries. As his Bristol admirers gave him little help, he turned to Horace Walpole, the arbiter of the taste of the day, and deceived the author of the 'Anecdotes of Painting' with a forged 'Rise of Peyncteyne yn Englande,' as completely as he had deceived Burgum with a genealogy from 'Simon de Seyncte Lyze.' Walpole, who soon learnt his mistake, has been accused of treating Chatterton badly, though, considering the imposture that had been practised upon

him, it is difficult to see the justice of the accusation, and it would have been well if the young poet had followed the advice contained in his second letter, which was neither unkindly meant nor roughly expressed: with Walpole's later defence of his conduct we have no concern here. Chatterton, who had taken up political writing, unfortunately went to London in 1770, just at a time when it was impossible for a satirist on the popular side to pick up a living; and there, half starved, poisoned himself in a lodging in Holborn. Six years after his death, Barrett showed Dr. Johnson 'the originals' of the Rowley poems, and Catcott, in the vain hope of convincing him, took him to the muniment room in St. Mary Redcliff, and pointed out 'the very chest itself' in which it was pretended that they were discovered. The poems show little learning; in spelling, and often in metre, in spirit, and in the words they contain, they are unskilful forgeries; they were written first in ordinary language, and were then translated with the help of a glossary. Apart, however, from their disguise, they show considerable genius and imagination. Although a few of Chatterton's undisguised pieces speak the work of a true poet, they are generally inferior to the Rowley poems, for no subject suited him so well as historical romance, and especially the romance of Bristol history. His least satisfactory productions are his satires, which are coarse and abusive. In these he was imitated by his companion Thistlethwaite, who had all his infirmities of temper without his genius.

It would be hard to overrate the influence that Chatterton's career had in awakening an interest in

literature in his native city. It is scarcely too much to say that he was indirectly the means of giving Bristol a share in the intellectual life of the nation. This subject cannot be followed out here. The name of Hannah More must be mentioned because it is a household word, and that of Southey both for its proper greatness and because it connects Bristol with an important epoch in general literature. Hannah More, a daughter of the master of a Free School at Fishponds, near Bristol, began to write her dramas shortly after Chatterton's death, and for a while joined her sisters in keeping a boarding school in Bristol which became fashionable. Productive as this excellent lady's pen was, it would not be easy to find many passages in her works that bespeak genius or imaginative power; still she had some literary talents and considerable influence. Among her pupils was Mary Darby (Mrs. Robinson), better known as 'Perdita,' a native of Bristol, whose verses, though in some respects poor enough, show command of metre. The year 1798 saw both Coleridge and Southey lecturing in Bristol. Robert Southey, the son of a linendraper in Wine Street, has left us a charming account of the house in ugly dirty Bedminster, in which his childish days were spent with his aunt Miss Tyler, where a paved fore-court led to a porch covered with jessamine, and inside were a parlour with dark boarded floor and the best kitchen, where the family lived: years after he loved to remember the scent of the barberry bush at the orchard gate. Later, when his aunt lived in Terrill Street, then almost a rural place, he went to a school kept by an old Welshman at the Fort on St. Michael's Hill, which was attended by the

sons of many of the rich merchants, and among them by many Creoles. The number of boys had fallen from 100 to 40; for Southey was there in the middle of the war with America, and money was scarce in the city. He met Coleridge in Bristol in 1794, and introduced him to his friend Robert Lovell, the Quaker poet, the son of a pinmaker in Castle Green. The new friends were full of the democratic fervour that filled so many hearts during the early years of the French Revolution, and of the three, Coleridge, though he soon came to think differently, was the most ardent admirer of revolutionary principles. Here the young poets elaborated their scheme of a pantisocratic settlement on the Susquehanna. Turning from the old world with its despotism and selfishness, they and others, with kindred souls, planned a colony in the new world, where all should be equal in all things, where each should labour for the common good, each contribute to the general elevation of mind, and each be blest with the society of a young, beautiful, and helpful wife. This last arrangement presented little difficulty, for Lovell had married one, and Southey was engaged to another, of the daughters of a Bristol tradesman named Fricker, who at his death had left the girls penniless, and before long their elder sister Sarah was converted to pantisocracy, and became Mrs. Coleridge.

To start a golden age, however, money was needful: Coleridge had none, and Southey was now in the same plight; for his aunt, who was then living in College Green, turned him out of doors when she heard of his schemes of marriage and pantisocratic colonisation. They therefore gave lectures in Bristol, which were

attended by large and delighted audiences, Coleridge delivering orations full of vigour and with many glowing invectives against Pitt, on the English Rebellion and the French Revolution, and on Revealed Religion, while Southey chose less exciting historical subjects. Here too they found a publisher, young like themselves, and, in his own estimation at least, a poet, the worthy and self-satisfied Joseph Cottle, brother of Amos (the two brothers are confused by both Canning and Byron in well-known lines), and the author of 'Alfred' and other works. From Cottle's shop were issued the earliest poems of Southey and Lovell, in a thin volume, the authors being described as 'Bion' and 'Moschus;' Southey's 'Joan of Arc,' Coleridge's 'Poems on various subjects,' and the 'Lyrical Ballads' of Coleridge and Wordsworth, which contains the 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner.' It is impossible to read this wonderful production side by side with Chatterton's ballad 'The Death of Sir Charles Bawdin' without believing that the work of the Bristol boy had considerable influence on the later poet; both pieces are full of everything that marks the highest form of ballad poetry. Coleridge's residence in Bristol may have had something to do with his choice of a maritime subject. His delight in the romance of past ages was rather part of the spirit of the time than the direct result of the influence of the Rowley poems, though they, it should be remembered, were one of the earliest manifestations of that spirit. It is usual to trace a connexion between the value attached to the accent in these poems and the metre of 'Christabel'; this connexion however depends on a theory as to the metre of Coleridge's exquisite fragment that seems to me to be

unsound. The 'Monody on the Death of Chatterton' bears witness to the deep impression that the works and the fate of the 'marvellous boy' made on the mind of Coleridge in his early days when he dared

> No longer on the sad theme muse,
> Lest kindred throes persuade an equal doom.

Both alike were singers, and in both alike there was the same imaginative power, though exercised in different fields, and though in the case of Chatterton death prevented the perfect development that it attained in Coleridge. In after days both Coleridge and Southey returned more than once to Bristol, where people seem to have enjoyed being lectured to. The editor of a Bristol newspaper nowadays would scarcely offer his readers instruction in the shape of Coleridge's 'Essays on Criticism, concerning the Fine Arts,' which first appeared in 'Felix Farley's Journal' in 1814. In 1797, Southey, who was then living at Westbury, used to love to walk across the Downs and talk with Humphry Davy, the young Cornishman whom Dr. Beddoes had put in charge of the Pneumatic Institution he had founded in Dowry Square, and who was then deep in his experiments on gases. While on another visit he joined Cottle in a scheme for the publication of Chatterton's poems for the benefit of the poor lad's sister and her daughter; for he was ever ready to help the distressed, and all through his life Bristol held a high place in the regard of this learned and simple-hearted master of English prose writing. Many men of note in literature, in science, and in art have adorned the city in later days, but their names must be sought in larger books. At

the same time, no book about Bristol, however small, should omit to say a word about Samuel Seyer (*d.* 1831), a clergyman and a schoolmaster, whose 'Memoirs of Bristol' is an excellent specimen of the better class of local histories of its day: indeed from the time of Chatterton and Barrett there has been no lack of volumes on the history of the city, though in this new attempt to deal with it I have not always found safety in the multitude of counsellors.

CHAPTER IX.

POLITICS AND RIOTS.

War of American Independence—Burke's election for Bristol—Instructions and mandates to members of Parliament—Causes of discontent at his conduct—His independence—His partial secession from Parliament—Party spirit and incendiarism—Irish trade—Roman Catholic relief—Burke rejected by Bristol—Roman Catholic emancipation and Parliamentary reform—Some eighteenth-century riots—Reform riots.

In common with other trading towns, Bristol saw with dismay the gradual alienation of our American colonies. The merchants petitioned for the repeal of the Stamp Act, pointing out the injury they sustained from the interruption of their colonial trade, and they sent an address of thanks to Lord Rockingham, who carried the repeal in 1766. In order to secure the safety of this measure, the right of Parliament to tax the colonies was declared, and during the next administration certain imports were made subject to duties. Great irritation was felt in America, and matters soon became threatening. Lord North, though he took off the duties from all other articles, left that on tea. A violent affray with the soldiers took place in Boston, and at last, in 1773, the cargoes of the tea ships were thrown into the sea. Among those whose opinions on the state of affairs were of some importance was Dr.

Tucker, dean of Gloucester, and rector of St. Stephen's, Bristol, a man of great commercial knowledge. He argued that we should lose nothing by letting the colonies separate themselves from us, because British capital would still attract their trade. Neither Lord Chatham, nor as yet Edmund Burke, would listen to the idea of separation. Chatham denied the right of Parliament to tax America. Burke, too large-minded to care for abstract questions, argued simply as a statesman. He did not, he said later, pretend to be 'an antiquary, a lawyer, or qualified for the chair of professor in metaphysics.' Although he held that it was reasonable that America should contribute, when able to do so, to the charges of Great Britain, he pointed out, in a famous speech he made on American taxation, in April 1774, that in attempting to enforce a tax of paltry amount the nation was incurring 'the loss, not only of peace, of union and of commerce, but even of revenue.' The Americans were not contending about money ; indeed, as the import duty of 3*d.* in the pound took the place of 12*d.* that had before been paid in England, they had their tea cheaper. 'Their feelings were the feelings of Mr. Hampden' when called on to pay 20*s.* ship-money ; they objected to the attempt to raise money from them without their own consent. England had by partial repeals already acknowledged that no revenue was to be had from America. 'If we lose the profit,' Burke urged, 'let us get rid of the odium.' These ideas were not held by the members for Bristol, Lord Clare, who took office under the Grafton government, and after whom the new Clare Street had lately been named, and Mr. Brickdale, who was a Tory.

Although these members were supported by the corporation, they had not the confidence of a large party in Bristol composed of men who desired to lessen the influence of the Crown, and who generally favoured the policy advocated by Burke and the Rockingham Whigs. In order to bring their members to their own views, the leaders of this party forwarded them certain 'instructions.' Clare objected to this dictation, and in the summer of 1774, the year in which the rupture with the colonies was hastened by the measures passed for the punishment of Boston, several of the leading citizens of Bristol thought of attempting some change in the representation.

Chief among these was Richard Champion, a merchant engaged in the American trade, and better known as the maker of Bristol china. As early as 1766 Champion had tried with little success to make china from kaolin that he received from South Carolina, and it was not until the removal to Bristol of the Plymouth works, which he subsequently purchased, that he was able to produce from native clay the first hard natural porcelain made in England. His manufactory was in Castle Green, and besides his partner, Joseph Harford, an iron merchant, one or two other Bristol men embarked money in the concern, which was watched with much interest by the Duke of Portland and other Whig magnates of the same party. Champion and his friends sounded Burke as to whether he would be willing to stand for Bristol with Mr. Cruger, a merchant of the city. Nothing however was settled, and when Parliament was suddenly dissolved in the autumn, Burke accepted a seat for Malton, while the two old members and Cruger stood for Bristol. Clare retired in anger, and on the second

day of the poll Burke was proposed by Champion and seconded by Harford. The news was brought him on Tuesday, October 11, the day of his election at Malton, as he was sitting down to dinner with his friends there. He at once set off for Bristol, and, driving day and night, reached the city on Thursday at 2.30 P.M. A few minutes later he addressed the electors. He entered into no definite pledges; he would try to reconcile the constitutional superiority of Great Britain with American liberty; he had ever laboured for the advancement of commerce; was he worthy to represent a great trading city? On November 3—for the poll only closed the day before—Cruger and Burke were declared to have beaten Brickdale. Burke's speech of thanks is of more than ordinary importance. No other statesman has so often, when speaking on some special occasion, uttered constitutional maxims that are for all time. His lofty thoughts were never bounded by the exigencies of the moment; his political perception was undisturbed by selfish aims, and his utterances were never wrapped in the obscurity of evasion. Cruger, his 'foolish colleague,' as he afterwards had occasion to call him, had promised the electors that he would obey their 'instructions.' This was just what they wanted; it was conceding the very point of dispute with Lord Clare. And, be it remembered, such a desire was more excusable then than it is now. Many members sat for boroughs that were virtually without voters; they had no duties to constituents, and this, to some extent, led members who had constituents to neglect them until a dissolution was imminent. Such neglect was irritating; for in those days, when the nation at large was beginning to feel the

stake it had in public affairs, parliamentary reporting was difficult, and public meetings were looked on with suspicion; so that men at a distance from London had little opportunity of learning about politics save from their members, or of making their wishes heard, except through these 'instructions' or petitions. Burke, however, saw that obedience to the mandates of a constituency degraded a representative to the position of a delegate, that it implied the sacrifice of independence, the ruin of statesmanship, and the betrayal of duty. He spoke of all a member owed his constituents, 'the sacrifice of his repose, his pleasures, his satisfaction. But,' he said, 'his unbiassed opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you, to any man, or to any set of men living,' and he declared that 'mandates' and authoritative 'instructions' arose 'from a fundamental mistake of the whole order and tenour of the constitution.'

Acting on this principle, Burke shunned making visits to Bristol. He served the city in the best way by his attempts at conciliation with America. They were in vain, and the war began in April 1775. Nor did he neglect the personal interests of his constituents, whose commerce was hampered by the war: he was 'the agent, the solicitor of individuals, and in acting for them appeared rather as a ship-broker than a member of Parliament,' but to him 'the meanness of the business was raised by the dignity of the object.' Still he did not satisfy the Bristol people, and the causes of their discontent may be stated briefly as the infrequency of his visits, his short secession from Parliament, and the support he gave to the bills for the

relaxation of the restrictions on Irish commerce, for the relief of the Roman Catholics, and for the amendment of the law of imprisonment for debt. Burke's friends, who formed a kind of club at the 'Bell' in Broad Street, gave him to understand that a yearly visit at least was necessary; for his opponents took advantage of his absence to insist that their member, who had defeated the electors on the subject of 'instructions,' cared little for their wishes. On visiting the city at the request of his friends in September 1775, he found the corporation divided; half were Tories, and of the rest, half were of his party and half were 'languid;' the Dissenters were well disposed, and so were nine-tenths of the Quakers, who were not spoilt, as in London, by contact with the Court. The citizens generally believed that 'things would come right of themselves,' and accordingly the merchants bought freely, and exhausted their capital, a mistake for which they suffered heavily. Burke himself knew that the war would be long and bitter. Early in 1777, finding their efforts for peace wholly unavailing, he and most of the Rockingham Whigs withdrew, to some extent, from attendance in Parliament, and offered no opposition to a bill for a partial suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. Secession of this kind, a mistake on every ground, is especially injurious to the interests of the seceders, and Burke's friends thought that he neglected his duty, and slighted the authority of Parliament. His enemies accused him of being an 'American.' Party feeling was embittered by the accusations which arose out of the attempts that were made to burn the city. In January, a few weeks after a fire at the dockyard at Portsmouth, three ships were

fired at the Bristol quay, and various other fires broke out in different buildings. The incendiaries were supposed to be Americans; Burke's party was held to some extent to be guilty, and as usual the great statesman himself did not escape the foulest calumny. Although the fires were found to have been the work of James Aitken, or 'Jack the Painter' as he was called, who was hanged at Portsmouth on March 10, this did not mend matters, for Aitken was a republican, and intended to forward the interests of America. The Bristol Tories were furious against Burke, and his own friends thought that he neglected the cause of liberty by seceding from Parliament. He defended his conduct with regard to the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act in a 'Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol,' declaring his detestation of the measure, and defining the proper sphere for the exercise of the powers both of Parliament and of the Crown. This masterly performance called forth several replies: for one of the most foolish of them, by 'the Electors of Bristol,' the city is of course not answerable.

The chief grievance against Burke was based on the support he gave in 1778 to certain bills for relaxing the restrictions placed on Irish trade. Ireland, while bearing her share of the heavy taxation imposed by the war, was deprived of the means of wealth by the selfish policy that restricted her commerce. Matters had grown worse with her of late, for the war had ruined her linen trade, and she was forbidden to export provisions, lest (so at least it was pretended) they should come into the hands of the enemy. The Irish were starving, and the only hope for the country lay in some relaxation of the commercial code. Bills for this

purpose were brought in by Lord Nugent, and were upheld by Burke. A violent outcry was raised against the proposals by the merchants of London, Bristol, Manchester, and other large towns, who thought that the gain of Ireland must necessarily mean their loss, and a letter of remonstrance was sent to Burke by the Merchant Venturers. They preferred, they said, a measure for legislative union; probably in the hope of increasing Ireland's share of taxation. Union, Burke replied, was not then the question; when it was, he would give it 'an honest and unprejudiced considera-rion.' For the present he pointed out that, as Bristol was so well situated for the commerce of Ireland, it must profit by anything that brought prosperity to that country. In another letter to two merchants he defended himself against the charge of acting against his constituents. 'Trade,' he said, 'is not a limited thing,' in which one man's gain must be another's loss, and he claimed the relaxation as the right of Ireland. The opposition of the towns was so strong that Lord North reduced the concessions to a minimum. Two years later, when, in the day of England's humiliation, an armed Ireland demanded her rights, no town 'dared to mutter a petition.' Burke, while taunting the minister, upheld the measure, and for this Bristol would not forgive him.

Religious prejudice helped to swell the discontent of Burke's constituents; for he voted for, and warmly approved of, Sir George Savile's bill for the relief of the Roman Catholics from those penal laws which not only were now and again used for purposes of the grossest tyranny, but also constantly kept many loyal subjects

in a state of insecurity and terror. Although not more than four or five persons in the city had signed 'that libel on the national religion and English character,' the Protestant Association of Lord George Gordon, the Low Church party and the Dissenters were strong in Bristol, and Burke was made to suffer for his conscientious conduct. Lastly, with his invariable anxiety to succour the distressed and soften the social hardness of the age, he supported a bill to amend the cruel laws of imprisonment for debt, and this displeased the merchants, who fancied that any such relaxation would be subversive of the foundation of commercial credit. At the election of 1780, Burke defended his conduct on each of these points in a speech delivered at the Guildhall. In the course of this speech he spoke with feeling of the losses his friends had sustained during the war. 'I had seen blown down,' he said, 'and prostrate on the ground, several of those houses to whom I was chiefly indebted for the honour this city has done me.' The poll opened three days later, and before it began, finding that he had no chance of success, he appeared in person on the hustings, and in a few manly words declined the election. 'Indeed, my dear Burke,' wrote Charles James Fox, 'it requires all your candour and reverse of selfishness to be in patience with that rascally city.' Who is there that does not share the feelings of the warm-hearted statesman?

During the fifty years that followed the rejection of Burke, the history of Bristol has comparatively little general political importance. While the Tories had the majority in the electorate, the representation from 1784 to 1831 was divided between both parties. Although the

French Revolution found some admirers in the city, and the party in favour of the reform of Parliament for a while gathered strength, it was checked by the pressure of the revolutionary war, and the cause of reform fell into discredit. The party was kept together by a club in which, in 1807, Henry Hunt, the Radical, took a leading part. At a by-election in 1812, and again at the general election in the same year, Hunt contested the city unsuccessfully. Apart from other causes, the violent anti-Catholic feeling, which we have seen arrayed against Burke, still helped the Tory cause. In 1830 an enthusiastic reception was given to Sir Charles Wetherell, the recorder, a man as honest and fearless as he was rough and eccentric, who, though attorney-general, had the year before made a violent speech against the government bill for Catholic emancipation, and had consequently been dismissed from office. The mayor, who was in favour of the bill, was insulted by the mob, and the windows of a Roman Catholic chapel were smashed. When the recorder came the next year to hold the gaol delivery, he was met with a different greeting.

After the peace of 1815 the cause of reform revived rapidly. The Reform Bill of 1831 excited much interest in the city: large meetings were held by both parties, and petitions—one in favour of reform with, it is said, 12,000 signatures—were sent up to Parliament. At the general election, which followed the defeat of the government in committee, Davis, who had sat as the Tory member since 1812, found he had no chance of re-election, and for the first time since the election of Cruger and Burke, the city was represented by two Whigs. The Bill was re-introduced, and the second

reading was carried. A desperate and unavailing resistance was offered by the Tories in committee, and in this Wetherell was conspicuous. The reformers bore the rejection of the bill by the Lords with impatience, and riotous proceedings ensued in London, Derby, Nottingham, and other places. Destructive as some of these were, they were outdone by the riots at Bristol.

The violence of the Bristol mob had long been notorious. A few instances only of riots that took place during the last century need be given here. At the accession of George I. the rabble of Bristol was on the Tory and High-church side, and on coronation-day about 500 persons, called by their fellow-citizens 'Cheverellites,' after Dr. Sacheverell, the High-church hero, raised a great disturbance, crying 'Down with the Whigs; God bless Dr. Sacheverell; damn all foreigners!' cruelly maltreated several Whigs and Dissenters, and would have done more harm had not some of the aldermen routed them sword in hand. A special commission was sent to try the rioters, and while the judges were in the city, fresh disturbances broke out, and the old cavalier song was sung in the streets, 'Round-headed cuckolds, come dig, come dig.' Scenes of a like character took place in other towns, and these disturbances occasioned the passing of the law known as the Riot Act. The neighbourhood of the Kingswood collieries often proved dangerous to the peace of Bristol. In the spring of 1709, when wheat had risen from 4*s*. to more than 8*s*. a bushel, over 200 colliers entered the city, raised a riot, and were joined by several of the poor. The militia was called out and fortified with drink, and 'some bustle' took place. The mob was finally appeased by a

promise that wheat should be reduced to 5*s.* 6*d.* a bushel. A more serious bread-riot was raised in 1753. The colliers were joined by a large number of mechanics, weavers, hatters, and the like, and came to Lawford's Gate 'by beat of drum.' The gates were shut, and a body of dragoons was summoned from Gloucester. The next day the mob entered by Milk Street, and the soldiers and some of the citizens, with the mayor at their head, engaged them in the streets; four of the rioters were slain and many were wounded. The Bristol Bridge riots have a more important bearing on the history of the city. The new bridge of 1767 was built, according to the evil custom of the time, of which something will be said in the next chapter, not by the city itself, but by a body of commissioners, who had leave to raise money for the work and for its repair by tolls from passengers, and rates on houses and shipping. The tolls were underlet, no accounts were published, and in twenty-six years' time the commissioners had 2,100*l.* in hand. Still fresh leases of the tolls were granted, until, to satisfy the demands of the inhabitants, a promise was made that no tolls should be taken after September 29, 1793. In spite of this promise, a few days before that date the tolls were again advertised. On the 28th a mob gathered, burned the toll-gates, and greeted the magistrates and a body of militia, summoned to enforce order, with a shower of stones. The next day, which was Sunday, the soldiers were again called out. On Monday the riot became more serious, and the Riot Act having been read three times, the soldiers were ordered to clear the bridge. They were savagely pelted, and, furious at this treatment, faced about and

fired up High Street. Eleven persons were killed and at least fifty wounded, for the firing was kept up for some time. Although great indignation was felt at the conduct of the soldiers, an attempt at an enquiry was stifled by the corporation, and the promoters were sneered at as revolutionists. The remembrance of this riot is preserved in the cry 'Give 'em Bristol bridge!' which is still raised by the roughs of the city when they mean mischief.

All former riots, however, sink into insignificance compared with the Reform riots of 1831. The prominent part the recorder had taken in opposition to the bill made him the most unpopular man in the country, and nowhere was he more unpopular than in Bristol. It was expected that an attack would be made upon him when he came down to hold the gaol delivery, which was fixed for Saturday, October 29. An ill-judged attempt to entrap the sailors into acting as a guard failed; they refused to be 'made a cat's-paw' by the corporation. Special constables were enrolled, and two troops of the 14th Dragoons and one of the 3rd Dragoon Guards, under the command of Lieutenant-colonel Brereton, a resident officer, were quartered near the city, not to be used but in the greatest emergency. Stones were thrown at the recorder's carriage as he entered the city, the women of Temple parish being especially violent; the court was interrupted, and after its adjournment Sir Charles was taken to the Mansion House, in Queen Square, amid the howls of a dense crowd. Sharp skirmishes took place between the mob and the 'specials,' who were left without any leadership. In the evening the Mansion House was attacked, and Sir Charles, whose life was loudly

threatened, made his escape by the roof. Matters were becoming serious when the military arrived, and the Riot Act having been read three times, a magistrate ordered Brereton to clear the streets. Brereton unfortunately was afraid to act with vigour, and seems also to have shared the prevailing folly of deferring to the passions of the mob. He ordered the troops to 'ride through' the rioters and 'walk them away,' he shook hands with them, and led cheers for the king. This only encouraged them, and was the cause of the violence that followed. At the same time it must be said in his excuse, that the mayor, Charles Pinney, and the magistrates generally do not seem to have given him the full and definite authority he thought necessary to relieve him from responsibility. A shirking of responsibility on both sides had indeed much to do with the growth of the riot. That decisive measures would at this period have quickly restored order is evident; for a captain of the 14th, who charged down several streets, completely scattered the mob that was threatening the council-house. His men were pelted with brickbats, and in return shot a ringleader of the rioters. Seeing that these soldiers would not be trifled with, the mob dispersed.

On Sunday morning, Brereton withdrew the picquet from the Mansion House, which was immediately sacked, the mayor and one of the sheriffs escaping by crawling over the roofs of the houses. As the rioters were enraged with the 14th, Brereton, hoping to pacify them, applied to the magistrates for leave to send the two troops out of the city. In spite of their remonstrances, he ordered the unwilling troopers to leave 'at a trot,'

and Bristol lay at the mercy of the rioters. The gaols—the Bridewell, the gaol on the New Cut, and the Gloucestershire county prison—were forced, the prisoners liberated, and the buildings fired. An attack was made on the bishop's palace, and the magistrates ordered Brereton to defend it: he came up with sixteen men, and finding that the constables were handling the rioters pretty roughly, said before the mob that, if 'the striking' was repeated, he would 'ride the constables down.' He withdrew his men, and the palace was burnt. Meanwhile the Mansion House was also set on fire. A troop of yeomanry rode into the city; but, as the mayor had gone to rest himself in Berkeley Square, and Brereton would do nothing without him, the captain, having 'paraded the city for two hours without finding a magistrate,' marched his men home again. During the night the north and west sides of Queen Square were sacked and burnt. While a number of rioters were engaged in plundering the upper rooms of the Custom House, their fellows set it on fire. Some fifty men perished in the flames, and two or three who jumped from the windows on to the portico were slowly boiled to death in the molten lead. The fire spread to King Street and Prince's Street: vast quantities of burning spirits flowed from the warehouses along the gutters, and drunken wretches died as they tried to lap the flaming liquid. While all this was going on the mayor was still in Berkeley Square and Brereton was actually in bed. At 3 A.M. the mayor, alarmed at the furious conflagration, sent a note to the officer in command authorising him 'to take the most vigorous, effective, and decisive measures to quell the riot.' In Brereton's

absence the note was given to Captain Warrington, who declined to act without the presence of a magistrate.

No vigorous steps were taken until Major Mackworth, who was staying in Bristol, insisted that the handful of dragoons who were idling in Queen Square should charge the mob. He then fetched back the troops of the 14th which had been sent out of the city; reinforcements arrived from Gloucester, and the soldiers charged along various streets in separate parties, using their sabres freely. Troops of all kinds soon began to pour into the city, and the riot was at an end. As many as 500 are said to have perished by fire, drunkenness, and the sword, but no satisfactory calculation is possible. Brereton was brought before a court-martial, and shot himself after the fourth day of his trial. Warrington was sentenced to be cashiered, but was allowed to sell his commission. The mayor was tried for neglect of duty, and was acquitted. He was deformed and delicate, and, though a man of high character, was physically and mentally unfit to meet an emergency. A special commission was sent down to try the prisoners; four were hanged, and eighty-eight were sentenced either to transportation or lesser punishments. Feebly as both Brereton and Pinney behaved, the citizens at large can scarcely be acquitted of extraordinary apathy; the magistrates found that they could not reckon on support, and a meeting they called on Sunday to take measures for the restoration of order was thinly attended. Two changes were evidently necessary. One was pointed out in the speech with which the king opened the next session of Parliament. 'The scenes of violence and outrage which have occurred in the city

of Bristol and in some other places have caused me the deepest affliction. . . I think it right to direct your attention to the best means of improving the municipal police of the kingdom.' The other reform which these events prove to have been urgently needed was, that the old system of the self-election and irresponsibility of the corporation should be replaced by one that would give the citizens generally a voice in, and a control over, the government of the city. These changes have happily been effected.

CHAPTER X.

DECLINE AND REVIVAL.

Bristol commerce at the end of the last century—Rule of self-elective oligarchies—Period of high port dues—Municipal Reform Act and the Free Port Association—Ruin of the West India trade—Emancipation of the slaves—Equalisation of the sugar duties—Trans-Atlantic steamships—Purchase of the new docks—Conclusion.

In this chapter I propose to consider the causes of the decline of Bristol trade, and to state briefly the principal efforts that have been made to restore the prosperity of the city. Before entering on this subject, it will be well to give a summary of the commercial condition of Bristol in the last years of the eighteenth century. The West India trade was flourishing, though the trade in slaves had to a great extent been transferred to Liverpool. Bristol sugars commanded the highest price abroad, and were shipped chiefly to Hamburg and Holland. On this trade depended the vast cooperage business, carried on partly as a separate employment, and partly as an adjunct to the import and export of sugar, rum, and molasses, and in a great degree also the making of brass and copper vessels, that were used in the plantations in the manufacture of sugar. Hemp was imported from Russia, deals from Norway and the Baltic

lands, wine from Spain, and fruit and oils from the Mediterranean. A considerable trade was done in Spanish wool, and though Bristol, in common with the rest of the kingdom, suffered some loss during the French revolutionary war, the commerce with Spain and Portugal was much quickened. The wool was sold to the Western clothiers, for the manufacture of cloth had now virtually left the city. This wool trade was transferred to London after the peace of 1815, partly in consequence of a dispute between the Bristol and Spanish firms. During the last twenty years of the century, a flourishing trade was established in the import of ivory, palm oil, and gold dust from the Guinea coast, in exchange for rum and a vast quantity of miscellaneous articles, and the produce of the Bristol distilleries also found ready markets in Quebec and North America. In addition to the requirements of the West India planters, the Birmingham workmen largely depended on Bristol for brass and zinc. As many as fourteen glass-works were employed chiefly in the production of bottles; iron in every shape was exported and sold for home use, tanneries were in abundance, and the manufacture of soap still flourished.

At the same time Bristol no longer held the position of the second city in the kingdom, and before long it entered on a period of decline, now happily arrested by the public spirit of the citizens. This decline was due to the general determination of commerce to the north of England, to the rapid rise of Liverpool, to the natural drawbacks of the port, to the ruin of the West India trade, and to a large extent also to the short-sighted policy which drove trade away from the city by the

imposition of heavy local rates. While other causes would have been sufficient to rob her of the proud position she had so long held in comparison with all the cities of England save London, it was this selfish and suicidal mistake that destroyed for a time her actual prosperity. The corporation of Bristol was, as we have seen, self-elective, and admission was denied to all who did not belong to the same political party. The common council, consisting of the mayor, twelve aldermen, and thirty common councilmen, had the entire government of the city; it elected the mayor, recorder, sheriffs, and other officers of the corporation, and filled up vacancies in its own body. Other aldermen beside the recorder were elected by the mayor and aldermen from the council: some of them were non-resident, and places were occasionally filled up by arrangements made at the dinner-table. Many abuses prevailed here, as in most other towns in the days of the close corporations, and the community of interest between the citizens at large and the governing body was scarcely recognised. Money was lavished on show and on magnificent banquets, and was grudged for works of public utility. From 1601, the Merchant Venturers, who then fairly represented the whole mercantile interest of the city, had constantly, if not uninterruptedly, farmed the port dues, wharfage, cranage, and the like. This society, though a faithful and munificent steward of the large charitable funds with which it was entrusted, was also a close corporation, and as the Merchants could at this period always command a majority in the council, the two bodies worked in complete harmony.

Such, then, were the powers that ruled the fate of

Bristol trade at the opening of the present century, an unusually critical epoch in the history of the city. The introduction of the use of steam coal for purposes of manufacture had already transferred the preponderance of commercial importance from the south to the north of England, and though Bristol is fairly supplied with fuel, the thin and broken seams of the neighbouring coal-fields cannot compare with the rich seams of the northern mines. Situated seven miles up a river, then ten times more difficult of navigation than it has since been made by modern improvements, its port was not likely to attract ships, especially as the quick and violent ebb of the tide delayed their progress and often endangered their safety. Liverpool, on the other hand, was not subject to these disadvantages, and quickly drew to itself much of the commerce with America and the West Indies that would otherwise have come to Bristol. As early as 1764, the ships entering the port of Liverpool were 766, against 332 entering that of Bristol, while outwards 832 ships sailed from Liverpool against 343 from Bristol; and in 1784, when Bristol contributed 334,909*l.* to the customs, the remittances from Liverpool amounted to 648,684*l.* In order to remedy the evils occasioned by the rapid ebb of the tide, and to give the city a better dock than a mere tidal river, a Dock Company was formed in 1803. This company dug a new channel for the Avon, called the New Cut, from Rownham to Totterdown, turned the Frome and the Avon into a floating harbour of two miles and a half in extent by a system of dams and locks and, in addition, made Bathurst Basin.

The advantages which would have naturally accrued

to the city from this undertaking were lost by mismanagement. The expense of the work was enormous, and the corporation and the Merchants consequently gained the right of appointing two-thirds of the directors of the dock company from their own bodies, and the affairs of the company, itself a private society, were managed simply with the view of obtaining large returns. These were sought in the imposition of high rates rather than in the increase of the business of the port. Instead of trying to offer special advantages, the company only sought to make all it could, and the mean rate on shipping levied in the port exceeded that paid at Liverpool by more than 48 per cent. and the London rate by 115 per cent. Wine that paid on importation at Hull 1*l.*, and at Liverpool 1*l.* 14*s.*, in local dues, was subject in Bristol to charges amounting to 3*l.* The proportionate charges on a cargo of silk and indigo would be represented by 1*l.* at London, 1*l.* 18*s.* at Liverpool, and 8*l.* 7*s.* 9½*d.* at Bristol. Master coopers bought their timber at Gloucester, where it was subject to sixty per cent. less charge than at their own port. A tonnage rate of three shillings was paid by ships from America, and of sixpence by coasters; and when a vessel from America that had discharged her cargo at another port proceeded with ballast to Bristol to take in a cargo for the return voyage, the dock company charged her as if she had come freighted from America, and not from a home port. In short, everything was done to bring profit to the dock company at the cost of the trade of the city. Nor was the 'club-spirit' confined to the corporation, the merchants, and the company, for the West India merchants conducted

business on similar principles. As large mortgagees of land in Demerara and the islands, the 'sugar lords' were the absolute masters of the planters: they forced up prices until sugar was actually bought in Liverpool for retail in Bristol, and kept up such extravagant charges for freightage to the West Indies, that goods were sent round to Liverpool to be reshipped there, in order to avoid them. It was not long before the evil effects of the inordinate local rates became apparent, and some efforts, in which the council joined, were made to procure their abatement. The interests of the dock company, however, stood in the way, and no sweeping measure of reduction was possible.

The beginning of better and wiser measures must be traced to the Municipal Reform Act, passed September 9, 1835. By this Act the city of Bristol was extended so as to include Clifton, the out-parishes and other districts, and was divided into ten (now thirteen) wards returning forty-eight councillors, who with sixteen aldermen made up the town council. The right of electing councillors was vested in the burgesses of each ward, and the mayor, recorder, and aldermen were chosen by the council. At the first election of aldermen the Tory list was carried, and as the aldermen formed a third of the council, this election decided the political character of their body, and has enabled the Tories to preserve a preponderance in the council ever since. The Municipal Reform Act brought the government of the city into harmony with the wishes of the citizens, and ensured the final success of a more liberal trade policy. It now became impossible that any concern which affected public interests should be allowed to

remain for any length of time under private control. For a while the dock company effectually prevented any material change for the better. The injury done to the trade of the city by high rates, and indeed the evils of the whole system of government by close corporations and societies, had been exposed in a series of masterly 'Letters by a Burgess' (John B. Kington) in 1833, and at last, in 1848, owing chiefly to the exertions of the Free Port Association and the Chamber of Commerce, the council bought the docks of the company, and at once reduced the port dues to a moderate scale. The effect of this liberal measure was quickly apparent, for the tonnage from foreign ports increased so largely that, in spite of the reduction, the money receipts of the docks soon grew far greater than during the period of high rates. Still, the natural drawbacks of the port, lessened though they were by the floating of the harbour, continued to press heavily on Bristol commerce. Before noticing how these have, within the last few years, at length been overcome, we must take a glance at other matters that affected the trade of the city.

The ruin of the sugar trade again brings us to affairs of national interest. An agitation against the slave trade, begun by the Quakers in America, was taken up in England by Clarkson and others in 1783. The trade was suspended and restricted, and finally, in 1807, during the Grenville Ministry, a bill was brought in by Lord Howick (Earl Grey) to render it illegal from January 1 of the following year. Although opposed by Eldon and Sidmouth, it was carried in the Lords by a majority of sixty-three, and was passed almost unanimously by the Commons. The measure was constantly

evaded until, chiefly owing to the efforts of Brougham, trading in slaves was made a felony in 1811. By these Acts the traffic in men, which in one form or other had been carried on by the Bristol merchants for so many centuries, was brought to an end. In its worst form it had been denounced alike by the saintly Wulfstan and the infamous Jeffreys, but it was long before men came to see anything inconsistent with religion or morality in the kidnapping and sale of negroes, and now and then pious prayers were offered for the success of a slaver's voyage. The trade, declared by the mayor in 1713 to be one of 'the great supports of our people,' had greatly diminished, and its suppression did no injury to the city. It led, however, to the Emancipation Bill of 1833. By this Act a gradual plan of emancipation was devised, which provided that adult negroes should serve an apprenticeship of seven years, and a sum of 20,000,000*l.* was voted as compensation to the slave-owners. Disturbances and illegal severities in Jamaica enabled the Melbourne ministry to force the legislature of the island to accept a premature termination of the period of apprenticeship, and the emancipation of the slaves was completed in 1838. Great as the satisfaction is with which one looks back at the high price the country paid so readily in order to perform an act of humanity, it must be acknowledged that the planters and merchants suffered severely. Although slavery had hitherto been sanctioned by law, and was not repugnant to their ideas of morality, they were heavily fined for practising it, for they were forced to part with their property at a wholly inadequate price—ten of the largest slave-owning houses in Bristol received about 158,000*l.*—and the

production of the commodities in which they dealt was rendered costly and difficult. From this time the West India trade of the city rapidly declined. This decline, however, was due not so much to emancipation as to the agitation against protection.

In spite of emancipation, the West India merchants and planters might still have carried on a profitable business; for, though they could no longer deal in slave-grown sugar, they were at least not subject to competition, for a protective duty of 63*s*. per cwt. was paid on foreign sugar, against 24*s*. on sugar produced in our colonies. This duty was first attacked in Parliament by Baring, the chancellor of the exchequer, who, in his budget of 1841, proposed to reduce the tax on foreign sugar to 36*s*. A debate of eight days followed, nominally on this proposal, though really also on the question of the fixed duty on corn, which depended on the verdict of the Commons on the sugar duties. The government was defeated, and as the general election that followed gave the Tories the majority, a new ministry was formed by Sir Robert Peel. With Peel the West India merchants believed themselves safe. Nevertheless in 1844, on the expiration of a treaty with Brazil, the government proposed to admit foreign sugar if free-grown, preserving only a differential duty of 10*s*. in order to help the colonies during the period of transition from slave labour to free labour. This proposal was attacked by two parties, by Lord John Russell and the Opposition, as a foolish attempt to protect free-grown sugar, and by the protectionists as certain to injure our colonies without finally settling the question of the duties. The protectionists were led by

Philip Miles, the senior member for Bristol and a large West India merchant, who set forth the difficulties and the distress already pressing on the colonies, urged the close connexion of the question with the protection of home-grown wheat, and moved an adverse resolution. His motion was supported by Lord John Russell and several members of the Opposition, and was carried against the government by a majority of twenty-two. On this Peel threatened to resign, and Miles withdrew from further opposition. In the following February, Milner Gibson, in a speech containing much exaggeration, proposed the abolition of the differential duty. This was opposed by Mr. W. E. Gladstone, who argued that the West India proprietors had a right to claim protection, and Gibson's amendment was rejected by a large majority.

In 1846 Peel made his recantation, deserted the protectionists, and the next year supported the new prime minister, Lord John Russell, in laying a uniform duty on sugar. This measure was vainly opposed by the protectionists under Lord George Bentinck, and by some members of the House of Lords, who believed that it would encourage slavery. In this they were not mistaken, for it was immediately followed by a considerable increase in the Cuban slave trade. While the equalisation of the duties ruined the trade of Bristol with the West Indies, destroyed the prosperity of the islands, and of all who depended on them, it gave the nation cheap sugar. At least half the plantations in Jamaica fell out of cultivation, for it was now impossible to produce sugar with a fair profit to the grower, except in Barbados, where the land is so fully occupied that the negro must work or starve, and where cultivation is therefore carried

on under exceptionally favourable circumstances. Long after the removal of protection, the excellence of the Bristol refineries attracted many cargoes of raw sugar to the port, and it is not long since the most famous of these refineries was closed in consequence of the importation of foreign manufactured sugar, 'a comparatively worthless article, containing little saccharine matter, which is sold cheaply because its production is fostered by bounties,' a result of free-trade little expected by its early apostles. Although the ruin of its West India trade lessened the prosperity of Bristol in many ways, the industries of the city were happily various, and her commerce was carried on in many waters.

All through her existence Bristol has naturally sought wealth in western commerce. The principal port for trade with the Ostmen of Ireland, the home of the earliest voyagers to North America, she became in the present century the originator of trans-Atlantic steam traffic, and has succeeded in establishing a large and increasing trade with America. The Great Western steamship company, formed in 1835, built the first steamer, the 'Great Western,' that was expressly intended for trans-Atlantic voyages. She was a wooden ship of 1,340 tons register, with engines of 440 horse-power, and was well designed and splendidly built. She started on her first voyage on April 8, 1838, and reached New York in fifteen days and ten hours, and though one or two steamers had crossed the Atlantic before her, the quickness of her passage, and the small amount of coal she consumed, afforded the first proof that steam traffic with America could be carried on with the assurance of profit. The importance of the

event was fully recognised in New York, and 100,000 people gathered to see her start on her homeward voyage, which she accomplished in fourteen days. Great rejoicings were made in Bristol on her return, and the company hoped to secure the permanence of the American trade. Unfortunately they made the fatal mistake of attempting to begin a line of navigation with a single ship. The Cunard company, at once following in the wake of Bristol enterprise and outstripping it, built four large ships for the trans-Atlantic service, obtained the mail contract, and made Liverpool the principal port for communication with America. The Bristol company did not yield without a struggle. Their next ship, the 'Great Britain,' instead of being built as a companion vessel to the 'Great Western,' was made as unlike her as possible. She was an iron ship and was propelled by a screw, then a novel invention. Although a fast and noble vessel she was unlucky. The lock had to be enlarged before she could pass out in December 1844, and in 1846 she ran aground, was not floated for eleven months, and then was sold and fitted with auxiliary engines. A new attempt was made to establish regular trade with America in 1871, and this has happily proved successful.

The increase of the trade of the city consequent on the reduction of rates made the improvement of the dock accommodation a matter of urgent necessity. Various plans were proposed, and at last, 1877–80, two docks were made at the mouth of the river, one at Avonmouth, on the Gloucestershire side, and the other at Portishead, on the Somerset side, of the Avon. Each dock was built by a separate company, though as the corporation

owned much property in Portishead, the council subscribed 100,000*l.* to the capital of the company for promoting the works at that place. Both docks, and especially that at Avonmouth, are well fitted for the accommodation of ships of any size. A considerable sum was also spent by the city in the improvement of the old harbour. As long, however, as the new docks remained under independent government, the city was only one, and the most heavily weighted, of three competitors for the profits of the shipping engaged in its commerce. This unsatisfactory state of things was brought to an end in 1884 when the corporation bought both the new docks, and was thus enabled to control the destination of all ships that entered the port. No better example can be given of the wholesome effects of the Municipal Reform Act than is afforded by the contrast between the position held by the corporation during the period of high rates, when the Floating Harbour was the only dock Bristol could offer to shipping, and the council was forced to look on helplessly while year after year trade was driven from its port, and the control it at present exercises over the magnificent docks at the mouth of the river. The liberal and public-spirited policy of the city has found, and is ever finding in larger measure, a due reward. The progress of its commerce during the years that this policy has, somewhat slowly it must be allowed, been gaining ground may be estimated by comparing the tonnage of vessels entering the port, given in the returns of 1847 as 546,753 tons, with the returns of the present year (1886), which show 1,343,962 tons. The principal exports are coal, salt, tin plates,

manufactured oils and spirits, and chemical products, besides a multitude of miscellaneous articles. The largest import trade is that carried on in grain and other provisions from Canada and the United States. Although small in comparison with what it once was, the trade with the West Indies is still noteworthy. Grain is imported from India and the Black Sea as well as from America; wine, oil, and fruit from France, Spain, and the Mediterranean; timber from Norway, British America, and the United States, and petroleum from America and Russia.

From the Bristol of to-day to the member of the royal manor of Barton is a long step backward, and in such a little book as this we have only been able to mark some of the principal stages in the growth of our town, such as, to speak first of its extension, the rise of the village at the back of the castle, and of the settlements round the religious houses; and to go on another step, the union, so long delayed and so fiercely debated, between the old town and Redcliff and Temple, and at a later date still, the changes of the eighteenth century; and lastly, the extension of the city's boundaries by the Municipal Reform Act. We have noted the principal epochs in the history of Bristol trade, and seen the importance of the town as a port for communication with Ireland, for the import of the wines of the South, and for the export of woollen goods. We have seen her stretch forth her hands to the New World, grow rich with the commerce of lands beyond the Western Ocean, and help to people them with men of our own race. An attempt has been made to show the close connexion

between the trade and the municipal government of the town, to exhibit a royal vill growing by reason of its commercial importance into a *commune*, and gaining strength to contend with, and at least to get the better of, a mighty feudal house, receiving first the organisation of the shire, and then the rank and dignity of a city. With the commercial greatness of Bristol are closely connected the oligarchical character of its government and the special social phenomena that followed the Black Death, a crisis increasing the importance of wealth in commercial transactions, and throwing power into the hands of an oligarchy of capitalists. And lastly, to advance again to the new era ushered in by Western discovery, we have seen the affairs of the city directed by close corporations, until the wiser policy of later days gave every burgess a voice in the management of everything which concerns the common welfare.

Looking back on the history of Bristol as a whole, we can see that, while the career of a trading town during the middle ages was marked by attempts at isolation, and was fostered by exclusive privileges, the national life of England has happily been strong enough to make the prosperity of such a town part of the general welfare of the country, and that in tracing its fortunes we have been reading an important chapter in the history of the English people. In every political crisis, and in every social revolution, the trading town has always taken a deeper, and for that reason often a less easily discerned, part in the progress of the greatest commercial country of the world than has fallen to the lot of places whose chief interest lies either in military events or in the comparatively narrow field of

ecclesiastical antiquities. Although in studying a single example of municipal history we have had to do with much that seems at first sight of purely local interest, we shall have read to little profit if we have not perceived that there is little real isolation in the position held by such a town as Bristol at any period of its existence, and that few, if any, of its privileges have been without benefit to the country at large. The days when a city sought prosperity by efforts after isolation and grants of exclusive privileges are long gone by, and the wealth of one portion of the nation is now in a fuller degree than ever the wealth of all. From the attempts made to gain this community of interest, Bristol has to some extent suffered, though at the same time she now has a considerable share in the prosperity, or at least in the varying fortunes, of the nation's trade; and while the wiser of her citizens do not look forward to a future in which she will outstrip cities and towns which, though some of them in comparison with her are but of yesterday's growth, have now left her far behind, they have reason for their confident expectation that the commerce of their ancient city will continue to grow and flourish, and that she has a career before her not wholly unworthy of her glorious past.

INDEX.

ABBOTS

Abbots Leigh, 160
Abhorrers, 163
Adam Cheeseman, or the cheese-man, 62, 63
Adam of Usk, 89
Admiralty Court, 93
Adryan, John, mayor, 60
Ælfwerd, the moneyer, 3
Agincourt, 93
Aitken, James, *alias* 'Jack the Painter,' 196
Alchemist, a Bristol, 113
Aldermen, of Weavers, 81; of wards, elected by commons, 86, 87; self-elective court of, 87; election of, 209, 212
Aldworth, Thomas, 138, 140; Robert, 141; Richard, 147
America, North, discovery of, 2, 127
American Independence, War of, 190–192
'Angel Gabriel' the, ballad of, 137
Anne Boleyn, 56
Anne, Queen, 175
Anne, St., shrine of, 107
Armada, the, 136
Arms of Bristol, 73, 99
Austin Friars, 117
Avonmouth, Docks at, 218
Aylward Snew, 13

BERKELEY

Baccalaos, 130
Badlesmere, Bartholomew, Lord, 64, 65, 68
Bailiffs, 55, 87
Bakers, the craft of the, 52, 53
Banner of Bristol, 99
Bannockburn, battle of, 67
Baptists, 146, 158
Barbados, 142, 216
Barker, Andrew, 135
Barrett, William, historian of Bristol, 183, 184
Barton, the hundred of, 7, 8, 13, 16, 42, 43, 220
Barton, St. James's, 36
Bastard, a wine called, 132
Bath, 1, 16, 19
Baye, La, 74
Beaufort, Henry, Duke of, 166
Bedloe, the informer, 163
Bedminster, 7, 22, 38, 155, 185
Bell, the Common, 8, 61, 65, 108
Berkeley, 7, 16, 71; first house of, Roger, 16; Roger, 22, 23, 29; present house of, 11, 14, 22; *see* Harding and Robert Fitz Harding; Maurice, Lord, 40, 60; Thomas, Lord, 61, 63, 65; Maurice, Sir

(Lord), 61–63, 68, 70; Thomas, Lord, 70; Thomas, Lord, Admiral, 92; James, Lord, 100; Berkeley, Lady, 100; Maurice, Sir, 101; William, Lord, 101
Billeswick, 9, 22, 38
Bishopric of Bristol, 118, 119
Black Death, the, 3, 77–83, 95
Blake, Captain Robert, 151, 153
Blanket, Thomas, 76, 81
Bordeaux, 59, 60, 74, 93
Borough, nature of a, 42–44
Boucher, George, 148, 149
Boy Bishop, festival of the, 109, 110
Brandon Hill, 9, 88, 150, 178
Brazil, 215; island of, 126, 127
Brereton, Lieutenant-Colonel, 202–205
Bridge, Bristol, 4, 7, 20; stone, 38, 40, 41; new, 177; riots, 201
Brihtric, 13
Bristol, character of history of, 1–3, 220–222: name, 4; a county, 84, 85; an episcopal see and a city, 118, 119; Liberties taken as a model, 60; topography, 5–9; description of, in twelfth century, 18; extension of, by end of thirteenth century, 35–41; description of, in seventeenth century, 161; in eighteenth century, 175–177; *see* Bridge, Churches, Sieges, &c.
Bristol cotton,' 75
Bristol milk,' 161
Bristols in U. S. A., 142
Broadmead Records, the, 158
Burgage tenure, 48
Burgess, Letters of a, 213
Burgesses, 43, 44, 48, 53, 54
Burke, Edmund, 191–198; elected for Bristol, 193; visits
city, 195; *Letter to the Sheriffs of*, 196; rejected at, 198
Bush, Paul, Bishop, 118, 121
Bussy, Sir John, 90

CABOT, John, 127, 128; Sebastian, 122, 127–131, 133
Cadiz, taking of, 136
Calf, William, 46
Canaries, trade with the, 132, 135
Cann, Sir Robert, 163
Canynges, William, the elder, mayor, 94, 106
Canynges, William, mayor, 94–100, 106
Carmelite Priory, 37, 117
Carpenter, John, Bishop of Worcester, 106
Carr, John, 126
Castle, 7, 15–18, 26, 27, 31, 32, 64, 71, 90, 98, 146, 147, 160
Cathay, 126, and *note*
Champion, Richard, 192, 193
Chapels, St. Brendan's, 9; St. Clement's, 58; St. George's two, 58; St. Katharine's, 52; St. Mark's (the Mayor's), 37, 152, 171; many, 107; confiscation of free, 119
Charles I., 144, 157
Charles II., 155, 160–164
Charter, the Great, reissued at Bristol, 30
Charters, of 1155, 47, 71; of 1172, 24; of 1188, 24, 40, 47, 48, 60; of 1256, 59; of 1300, 59; of 1373, 84–86; of 1499, 87; of 1581, 87; of 1684, 165; of 1710, 175; surrender of, 164
Chatterton, Thomas, 182–184
China, Bristol, 192
Christmas Street, 15, 52; Steps, 152

CHURCHES

Churches, Bristol, All Saints, 7, 35, 49, 59; St. Augustine's Abbey (Cathedral), 22, 38, 117, 118, 152; St. Augustine's the Less, 38, 152; St. Ewen's, 3, 7, 35, 99; St. Giles's, 27; St. James's (Priory), 35; St. John's, 6; St. Leonards, 177; St. Mary-le-port, 7, 8, 35; St. Mary Redcliff, 7, 106; St. Nicholas, 6, 110, 116, 177; St. Peter's, 6, 7, 35; Sts. Philip and Jacob, 36; St. Stephen's, 105; Temple, 39, 52, 106, 109; Trinity, or Christ Church, 7, 8, 35, 49, 116, 120; St. Werburgh's, 4, 24, 105
Cipango (Japan), 128
Clare, Lord, 191, 192
Clement, St., 53, 58, 96
Clifton, 9, 151, 155, 180, 212
Clontarf, battle of, 10
Cloth trade; *see* Weavers *and* Woollen trade
Coleridge, S. T., 185–188
Colford, William, recorder, 80
College Green, 6, 9, 111, 118, 152, 176, 177
Colston, Edward, 167–170
Commune, nature of a, 54, 57
Contarini, Venetian ambassador, 129
Coroner, office of, 59
Corporation, 59, 164; 'purged,' 165; unreformed, 209; reformed, 212
Cottle, Amos and Joseph, 187
Council, a Great, held at Bristol, 30
Council, Common, 84, 86, 163, 209; new Town-council, 212
Courts, of borough, 14, 53, 54, 57; of Lords of Berkeley, 40, 61
Coventry, 99, 109, 112

ELEANOR

Crafts, 50–53, 79, 80–83, 105, *see* Weavers
Crecy, battle of, 73
Cromwell, Oliver, 142, 153, 157, 159, 160
Cross, High, 90, 161, 177; Stallage, 39
Cruger, Henry, 192, 193
Crusade, a naval, 46
Cut, the New, dug for Avon, 210

DAVY, HUMPHRY, 188
Defence Lane, 66
Defoe, Daniel, 174; his description of Bristol, 172, 175
Derby, Walter, Mayor, 74
Dermod MacMurrough, King of Dublin, 23
Despenser, Hugh, the elder and younger Lords, 70, 71; Thomas, Lord, 90
Dock Company, 210, 211
Docks, the New, 218, 219
Domesday Book, 13
Dominican Priory, 37, 70, 93
Dover, Dr. Thomas, 173
Draper, Sir William, 180
Dublin, 10–12, 23–25, 60
Ducking-stool, 177
Duddlestone, Sir John, 169

EADGAR, King, 10
Eadnoth, the staller, 12, 14
Eadward the Confessor, 11
Eden, Richard, 129, 130
Edgeworth, Roger, canon, 116
Edward I., 31, 33, 34, 65
Edward II., 64–71
Edward III., 72, 73, 75–77
Edward IV., 99, 102-105
Edward VI., 119, 133, 134
Eleanor of Aquitaine, Queen, 45
Eleanor of Brittany, 31

ELEANOR
Eleanor of Castile, Queen, 56
Eleanor of Montfort, 34
Elbridge, Giles, merchant, 141
Eliot, Hugh, discoverer, 130
Elizabeth, Queen, 106, 122–124
Engelard of Cigoine, 30
Essex, Colonel, 147, 148
Evelyn, John, visits Bristol, 161
'Exchange,' the ship, 132
Exeter, 21, 56, 121, 140

FAIRFAX, Sir Thomas, 153, 156
Ferm, or rent of Bristol, 13–15, 54, 56, 64
Fiennes, Nathaniel, 148–154, 157
Fires, frequency of, 38
Fishery, Bristol, 45, 65, 137, 145
Fitz Harding, name, 25; *see* Robert Fitz Harding
Frauncis, family of, 59
Free Port Association, 213
Frome, river, new channel dug for, 6, 37, 40
Fulford, Sir Baldwin, 99

GASCONY, 47, 93
Genoese, 94, 98, 132
Geoffrey, Bishop of Coutances, 13–16
George, St., 57, 74
Gesta Stephani, description of Bristol in, 18
Gilbert, Sir Humphrey, 138, 139
Gladstone, W. E., 216
Gloucester, 2, 25, 50, 71, 99, 102, 147, 154, 211
Gloucester, Earls of, Robert, 17–22, 35, 36, 39, 48, 49; William, 22, 26, 48; Gilbert of Clare, 31–33; Gilbert (son), 66; Dukes of, Thomas, 89; Richard, 102

INDIES
Gorges, Sir Ferdinando, 140, 147
Grammar School, 125
Grandison, Lord, 151, 154
'Great Western,' the steamship, 217
Grove, Thomas, mayor, 61
Guildhall, 53, 57, 58, 62, 65
Guilds, 48–53, 79, 80, 96, 119; *see* Kalendars, Merchant guild, &c.
Guy, John, governor, 138
Guyaquil, storming of, by Bristol sailors, 173

HAKLUYT, Richard, 137, 139, 140
Harding, 12, 14, 22, 39
Harfleur, taking of, 93
Harford, Joseph, 190, 193
Harold, Earl and King, 11, 12
Hawisia, the lady, 26
Hazard, Dorothy, 146, 152
Henry I., 17, 49
Henry II., 21–25, 27
Henry III., 30, 67
Henry IV., 90–92
Henry V., 93
Henry VI., 94, 97
Henry VII., 111, 126, 128
Henry VIII., 118, 131, 132
Henton, convent of, 60
Holyman, John, Bishop, 121
Hopton, Sir Ralph (Lord), 151, 154
Hotwells, 179–181
Houses, 9, 38, 108
Howel, Thomas, Bishop, 158
Hubberdin, preacher, 116
Huguenot refugees, 171, 178
Hunt, John, 67; Henry, the Radical, ~~130~~ 199
Hwiccan, the, 4

INDIES, WEST, 133, 142, 161, 162, 171, 208, 212, 217, 218

INSURRECTION

Insurrection, the Great, 63–69
Insurrection of 1549, 120
Ireland, 2, 10–12, 23, 24, 60, 148, 150, 154, 170, 171, 172, 196, 197
Ireland, Robert de Vere, Duke of, 90

James I., 137, 144
James II., 165, 166
James, Captain Thomas, 138
Jay, John, 126
Jeffreys, Chief Justice, 142, 166
Jews, 27–30
John, King, 24–27, 30
Johnson, Dr. Samuel, 184
Journeymen, rise of a new class of, 71, 82

Kalendars, Guild of, 49, 58, 59, 112
Katharine, St., 52, 63, 109; players, 109
Kidnapping, 11, 20, 142
Kingswood, 38; collieries of, 181, 200
Kitchin, alderman, 125
Kitts, St., merchants of, 162, 167
Knight, Sir John, 163, 164
Knights Templars, 39, 41; Hospitallers, 39, 41, 117

Lancaster, Thomas, Earl of, 66, 67, 69
Lane, Mistress, 160
Langrish, Lieutenant-Colonel, 152, 153
Latimer, Hugh, 115, 116
Lawford's Gate, name, 36
Learning, desire for, 111–113 115
Leprosy, 78

MUNICIPAL

Lewin's Mead, 9
'Lion,' the ship, 141
Lisbon, taking of, 46
Lisle, John Talbot, Lord, 100; Thomas, Lord, 101
Liverpool, 173, 207, 208, 210
Loans to Crown, 89, 97
Lollards, 88, 89, 91
London, 1, 45, 57, 59, 64, 67, 73, 83, 97, 137, 144, 145, 164, 172, 196, 200
Lovell, Robert, Quaker poet, 186
Lunsford, Harry, 152

Mabel, Countess, 17
Mackworth, Major, 205
Maine, state of, 138, 142
Margaret of Anjou, Queen, 102
Marlborough, 60, 147
Martyr, Peter, 129
Martyrs, Protestant, 121
Mary, Queen, 122, 133
Massachusetts, State of, 140–142
Matilda, Empress, 19, 21
'Matthew,' the, ship, 127
Matthew, master, 22
Mayor, office of, 54, 55; of staple, 77; escheator, 85; election of, 81, 108, 212
Mede, Philip, mayor, 101
Merchant guild, 53–59, 63
Merchants, Fellowship of, 58, 95, 96, 134
Merchant Venturers, 134, 135, 139, 168, 169, 197, 209
Methodists, 181, 182
Miles, Philip, 216
Monastic houses, 36–38, 116–118
Monmouth, Duke of, 165
More, Mrs. Hannah, 185
Morocco, trade with, 133
Municipal Reform Act, 45, 212

NAYLOR

NAYLOR, James, 159
Newfoundland, 130, 133, 137, 138, 145
Newspapers, local, 179
Nibley Green, battle of, 101, 102
North, Roger, on Bristol matters, 142, 163
Norton, Thomas, 'gentleman,' 103–105; a master-mason, 106; an alchemist, 113
Norumbega, 138–140

OLD MARKET STREET, 8, 36
Ostmen, 10, 11, 24, 25
Owen Glendower, 92

PAGE, Adam, mayor, 59
Pageants, 108–111, 122–124
Parkhurst, Anthony, 137
Parliament, a, held at Bristol, 34
Parliamentary representation, 32, 34, 75, 85–87
Peel, Sir Robert, 215, 216
Pemaquid, 141, 142
Pembroke, Earls of, Aymer de Valence, 67; John Hastings, 73; Jasper, 98; William Herbert, 191
Pepys, Samuel, 77, 161, 162
'Perdita' Robinson, 185
Pert, Sir Thomas, 131
Pilgrimages, 107, 108
Pinney, Charles, mayor, 203–205
Pirates, Algerine and Turkish, 132, 145
Pithay, 15, 126 *note*
Plagues, 124, 155; *see* Black Death
Plays, 109, 124; *see* Theatres
Plymouth, U.S.A., 140, 141
Plymouth Company, 140
Pope, Alexander, his description of Bristol, 175

ROBERT

Popham, Chief Justice, 140
Popish Plot, 163
Pring, Captain Martin, 139, 140
Privateers, 173–175
Provosts, 13, 55
Puritans, 146–160
Purvey, John, 88
Purveyance, 144

QUAKERS, 158, 195
Quay, Redcliff, 39; Bristol, 37, 38
Queen Elizabeth's Hospital, 126, 168
Queen Square, 162, 176, 202, 204
'Queen's Chamber,' Bristol, the, 56

RAMUSIO, Gian-Battista, 129
Randolf, William, mayor, 63, 64, 68
Rates, period of high local, 211
Recorder, 80, 87
Red Book, the Great, 57, 79, 99, 103; the Little, 80, 81
Red Maids School, 126
Redcliff, 7, 22; rivals Bristol, 39; reckoned with, 40, 41, 47; struggle for, 60–63, 84; fully united to Bristol, 85
Reeve, 9, 13, 14, 43, 55
Reform Bill, 199, 200; riots, 202–206
Reformation, 114–120
Richard I., 26
Richard II., 89, 90
Richard III., 56
Richard d'Oreseuilz, 27
Richard of Devizes, 44
Riots (eighteenth century), 200–206
Robert, Duke of Normandy, 17
Robert FitzHamon, 16, 17

ROBERT

Robert FitzHarding, 14, 22, 28, 37, 39
Robert FitzNichol. mayor, 54
Robert Mowbray, 16
Rogers, Captain Woodes, 173
Roman Catholic Relief, 197; Emancipation, 199
Roundaway Down, battle of, 151
Row, the Sword-bearer, 163, 164
Rupert, Prince, 148, 151, 155–157

SACHEVERELL, Dr., 168; riots, 200
Sagadahoc, river, colony on, 140
Salterne, Robert, 139, 140
Scarcity, years of, 125, 200
Seal, common, 72, 165
Selkirk, Alexander, 173, 177
Separatists, 146, 158
Sewin, reeve, 9, 14
Seyer, Rev. Samuel, historian of Bristol, 189
Sharington, Sir William, 120
Sheriffs, 84, 87 209
Ship money, 145
Ships, Bristol, 45, 47, 73, 74, 92, 95, 98, 126–128, 132, 136–138, 141, 161, 173, 217
Shipward, John, mayor, 101, 102, 105, 107
Shoemakers, 107
Shrewsbury, John Talbot, Earl of, 93, 100
Sieges of, and attacks on, Bristol, 12, 20, 27, 70, 151–154, 155–158
Simon of Montfort, Earl of Leicester, 31–33
Slave trade, 11, 20, 23, 82, 142; negro slaves, 133, 172; emancipation of, 214
Soap, manufacture of, 44, 132, 145, 146, 208

VIRGINIA

Southey, Robert, 185–188
Spain, 73, 74, 115, 135, 136, 141, 142, 161, 171, 208
Spenser, William, mayor, 103–105
Spicer, Richard, 58, 74; Thomas, 69; Stephen, 86; Spicer's Hall, 58, 96
Sprigg, Thomas, his *England's Recovery* quoted, 158
Staple at Bristol, 76, 77
Steam-ships, 217
Stephen, King, 18–21, 25
Stephens, John, mayor, 92
Stewards, 55
Sturmy, Sturmis, 28; Sturmys, Robert, 83, 97
Sugar trade, 132, 162, 172, 207, 212, 213; ruin of, 215–217
Swegen, Earl, 11

TAVERNER, John, Mayor, 34, 64, 68
Taxation, 34, 35, 40, 75
Temple Fee, 39, 40, 117
Tewkesbury, Abbey, 16; battle of, 102; chronicle of, 38
Theatres, 124, 178, 179
Thistlethwaite, James, 184
Thorne, Robert, 125, 130; Nicholas, 125, 132; Robert (younger), 130, 131
Tilly, Richard, mayor, 69
Towton, battle of, 99
Trade, 10, 44, 45, 47, 75, 93–96, 98, 132–134, 142, 161, 170–173, 207–212, 215–220
Traitor's Bridge, 166
Trelawney, Sir Jonathan, bishop, 166
Tucker, Dean, 191
Tuckers, 52
Turtle, Roger, mayor, 69
Twynyho, John, recorder, 103

VIRGINIA, 139, 140

WADE

WADE, William, 164, 166
Wales, 21, 31, 34, 47, 98, 99, 103, 150, 154, 172
Walleys, Henry le, 59
Walls, 6, 15, 16, 18, 28, 38, 41, 66
Walpole, Horace, 183
Wards, 7, 42, 87, 212
Washington, Colonel Henry, 151, 176
Weavers, 39, 52, 81–83, 107, 109, 124, 171
Werburh, 4; *see* Churches, St. Werburgh's
Wesley, John, 182
Wetherell, Sir Charles, recorder, 199, 200, 202
Whitefield, 181
Whitson, John, 125, 140, 144
Wilford, William, his successes at sea, 92
William the Conqueror, 11, 12
William Rufus, 16

YORK

Wiltshire, Earls of, William Scrope, Earl of, 90; James Butler, Earl of, 98
Wine trade, 2, 45, 74, 94, 132, 162, 208, 220
Winthrop, John, 141
Wishart, George, 116
Woollen and cloth trade, 2, 39, 44, 52, 75–77, 81, 91, 94, 170, 208
Wulfstan, Bishop of Worcester, 11, 16, 214
Wylington, Henry, 69
Wyrcestre, William, 58, 100, 112, 126, 180

YEAMANS, Puritan, 146
Yeomans, Robert, Royalist, 148, 149
Yonge, Thomas, 94, 97–99
York, Richard, Duke of, 97, 98

2 H²
-5

PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
LONDON